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THE CANTERBURY TALES.







THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMAGE.

THE

Canterbury Tales

BEING

SELECTIONS FROM THE TALES

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER

RENDERED INTO MODERN ENGLISH

WITH

CLOSE ADHERENCE TO THE LANGUAGE OF THE POET.

BY

FRANK PITT-TAYLOR.

"He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote
The Canterbury Tales, and his old age
Made beautiful with song."—LONGFELLOW.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN AND HALL, LIMITED.
1884.

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ERRATA.

Page 2, line 5 : For " thence," *read* " there."

Page 86, line 3 : For " Murmures," *read* " murmurs."

Page 125, line 14 : For " will," *read* " wilt."

Page 139, line 19 : For " for guiltless," *read* " as guiltless."



THE CANTERBURY TALES.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHEN April with its sweet refreshing rain,
After the drought of March, hath reached again
The roots, and bathed each vein with gentle shower,
Of which virtue engendered is the flower;
When, too, the Zephyr, with her sweetest breath,
Inspiréd hath in every grove and heath
The tender crops, and when the youthful sun
Within the Ram his full half-course[1] hath run,
And all the small birds make their melody,
And sleep throughout the night with open eye;—
Then 'tis that nature gives to men courage;
And folk do long to make a pilgrimage,

[1] Mr. Morris does not agree with Tyrwhitt in supposing that Chaucer here meant that the sun had run half his course in the Ram, but thinks he meant, what he says, "half-course." "From the Astrolabe (Ed. Skeat) we see that against the month 'Aprilis,' there appears in the circle of zodiacal signs, the latter half of Aries and the former half of Taurus. Thus the sun in April runs a half-course in the Ram and a half-course in the Bull. The former of these was completed, as Chaucer here remarks, and thus we must conclude it was past the eleventh of April."—*Morris*.

And palmers love to seek for unknown strands,
To serve the saints renowned in sundry lands;
And specially from out the furthest end
Of England, they to Canterbury wend,
The holy blissful martyr[1] thence to seek,
Who them hath holpen when that they were sick.
It so befell, at that time on a day,
In Southwark at the Tabard,[2] as I lay,
Ready to wend me on my pilgrimage
To Canterbury with devout courage,
At night were come into that hostelry
Full nine-and-twenty in a company,
Of sundry folk who happened there to fall
In fellowship, and pilgrims were they all,
That toward Canterbury wished to ride;
The chambers and the stables were full wide,
And our accommodation of the best.
And shortly when the sun had gone to rest,
So had I spoke to each and everyone,
That I was of their fellowship anon,
And we arranged to rise e'er it was late,
To wend our ways thence, as I here shall state.
But ne'ertheless, whilst I have space and time,
And ere I further in this tale do rhyme,
Methinketh it according to reason,
To tell you all the true condition
Of each of them so as it seemed to me,
And who they were, and eke of what degree;
Again, in what array I found them in:
And with a knight then will I first begin.

[1] Thomas á Becket. [2] The name of an inn in Southwark.

A Knight there was, and that a worthy man,
Who, from the earliest time when he began
To ride, had ever well loved chivalry,
Honour and truth, freedom and courtesy.
Full worthy was he in the Holy War,
And hitherto had ridden few so far,
As well in Christendom as Hethenesse,[1]
And ever honoured for his worthiness.
At Alexandria[2] was he when 'twas won;
And then full oft he had the board begun[3]
Above all nations in the land of Prussia;
In Lettowe[4] had he journeyed, and in Russia,
More oft than any Christian warrior.
In Gernade[5] at the siege of Algezir[6]
He had been also, and in Belmarie,[7]
At Layas[8] was he, and at Satalie,[9]
When they were won; and in the Greekish sea[10]
With many a noble army, too, was he.
At mortal battles had he been fifteen,
And fought, too, for our faith at Tramassene,[11]
In lists three times, and, aye, had slain his foe.
Again this worthy knight had been also

[1] Countries inhabited by heathen.

[2] *I.e.* in A.D. 1365 by Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus, who, however, immediately abandoned it.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] He had been placed in the seat of honour at the head of the table.

[4] Lithuania. [5] Granada.

[6] The city of Algezir was taken from the Moorish King of Granada in 1344.

[7] In Africa. [8] Layas in Armenia. [9] Attalia.

[10] Part of the Mediterranean from Sicily to Cyprus.

[11] In Africa.

In times past with the lord of Palatie,[1]
Against another heathén in Turkey;
And ever had he gainéd great renown,
And, though full worthy, was for wisdom known,
And in his port was meek as is a maid.
He never an offensive word had said
In all his life unto a meaner wight,—
He was a very perfect gentle knight.
But to narrate to you of his array,
His horse was good, but he himself not gay.
Of fustian did he wear a short gipon,[2]
All messed about with his habergeon,[3]
For he was lately come from a voyáge,
And now had started on his pilgrimage.
With him there was his son, a youthful Squire,
A lover, and a man made to admire,
With locks as curled as if laid in a press;
Of twenty years of age he was, I guess.
In stature was he of an average height,
And wondrous agile, and a man of might.
And he had been in many a raid at times,
In Flanders, Artois, and in other climes,
And borne him ever with so bold a face,
He hoped to stand well in his lady's grace.
Embroidered was he, as it were a mèad
All full of tender flowerets white and red.
Singing or playing on the flute all day,
He was as fresh as is the month of May.
Short was his gown, with sleeves both long and wide,
Well could he sit his horse and fairly ride.

[1] Palathia in Anatolia.
[2] A short cassock.
[3] A diminutive of *hauberk*, but often used as synonymous with it.

He, too, could sing, and well a tale could tell,
And joust, and dance, and paint, and write full well.
So hotly loved he that at night, the tale
Is told, he slept less than the nightingale.
Courteous he was, and lowly, and was able
To carve before his father at the table.[1]
A yeoman[2] had he, other servants none
At that time, for he wished to ride alone;
And he was clad in coat and hood of green.
A sheaf of arrows, peacock-winged[3] and keen,
Under his belt he bore full thriftily.
Well could he dress his tackel[4] yeomanly;
His arrows did not drop with feathers low,
And in his hand he bore a mighty bow.
His head was round as nut,[5] and visage brown,
For woodcraft had he always gained renown.
Upon his arm he bore an armlet gay
And by his side a sword and shield alway,
And on the other side a dagger keen,
Well made, and sharp as point of spear, I ween;
A Christofre[6] on his breast of silver sheen;
A horn he bore, the belt of which was green;
A forester he was, as I should guess.
There was also a Nun, a prioress,

[1] It was formerly the custom for squires to carve at the sire's table.

[2] A servant of the next degree above a garçon or groom. In more modern times it came to signify a small landholder.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] With peacock's feathers.

[4] Hunting weapons.

[5] With hair cropped short.

[6] A figure of St. Christopher used as a brooch. Supposed to have the power of shielding the person, who looked on it, from sudden danger.—*Wright.*

Who of her smiling simple was, and coy,
Her greatest oath was but "by St. Eloy;"
And she was calléd Madame Eglantine.
Full well she sang the services divine,
Entonéd through her nose full sweëtly;
And French she spake full fair and cleverly,
After the school of Stratford-at-the-Bow,[1]
For Paris French of course she did not know.
At meat, too, was she so well taught withal,
She ne'er allowed bits from her mouth to fall,
Nor soiled her fingers e'er in her sauce deep;
Well could she guide a morsel, and well keep
It in, that no drop fell upon her breast;
To shine in courtesy she showed much zest.
Her upper lip she careful wiped so clean,
That in her cup no grease was ever seen.

* * * *

And true it is, she was, as you might say,
Full pleasant, amiable and gay,
And pains she took to bear a courtly mien,
In manner to be stately as a queen,
And to be held worthy of reverence.
But now to speak here of her conscience:
She charitable was and piteous;
And she would weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead or bled.
Some little dogs she had, the same she fed
With roasted flesh, and milk, and fancy bread.
But sore wept she if one of them were dead,

[1] Chaucer evidently thought but meanly of the English-French spoken in his time. It was proper, however, that the Prioress should speak some sort of French.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Or if men smote one with a stick too smart,—
She had a conscience and a tender heart.
Full seemly round her neck her kerchief was;
Her nose was long, her eyes were gray as glass,
Her mouth full small, and then so soft and red,
But truthfully she had a fair forehead.
It was almost a span in breadth I trow;
For surely she was not of stature low.
Tasteful her cloak, as I was well aware.
Around her arms, of coral did she bear
A pair of beads, all deckéd out with green;
And thereon hung a brooch of gold full sheen,
On which there was first written a crowned A,
And also *amor vincit omnia.*
She had with her a nun, it so befell,
Who was her chaplain, and three priests as well.
A Monk there was of fair unblemished name,
Who loved full well to ride or hunt for game;
A manly man, to be an abbot able,
Full many a good horse had he in his stable:
And when he rode men might his bridle hear
All gingling[1] in a whistling wind as clear,
And eke as loud as doth the chapel bell.
And where this lord sometime had kept his cell,
Because he judgéd old and somewhat strict
The rules of the Saints Maur and Benedict,[2]
Unheeded he allowed old things to go,
And followed the new world in doing so.

[1] It was the fashion among the greater people in those days to carry bells on their horses' bridles.—*Morris.*

[2] The oldest forms of monastic discipline in the Romish Church.

He cared not for that text, a moulting hen,[1]
That saith that hunters are not holy men;
Or that a monk who is a wanderer,
Is likened to a fish without water;
That is to say, a monk out of his cloister;
This text esteemèd he not worth an oyster.
And I thought his opinion was not bad;
Why should he study and himself make mad,
And always on his books in cloister pore?
Or work hard with his hands, and eke labór,
As Austyn[2] bids? How should the world be served?
Let Austyn have his work for him reserved.
And therefore rode he hard, to speak aright,
Greyhounds he had as swift as birds in flight;
Naught pleased him more than hunting for the hare,
And riding, too, for no cost would he spare.
I saw his sleeves embroidered at the hand
With costly fur,[3] the finest of the land.
And fastening his hood beneath his chin,
He had of pure wrought gold a curious pin:
A love-knot at the larger end there was.
His head was bald, and shone as any glass.
His face also you'd think he did anoint.
He was a lord full fat with embonpoint;
His eyes were bright and rolling in his head,
And shone like fire beneath a cauldron fed.
His boots were supple, and of great estate
His horse, for sure he was a fair prelate.

[1] He did not care a straw, as we should say.
[2] St. Augustine.
[3] The habit of wearing fur trimmings was forbidden the monks by Cardinal Wolsey in 1519.

He was not pale as a tormented ghost.
A fat swan loved he best of any roast.
His palfrey was as brown as is a berry.
A Friar there was, a wanton and a merry,
He beggéd alms, and was a festive man.
In all the Orders four[1] are none that can
Know more of gossip and of fair languáge;
He had made oft full many a marriáge
Of youthful women, and at his own cost.
He to his Order was a noble post.
Full well beloved and popular was he
With franklins[2] of all grades in his countrý,
And eke with worthy women of the town.
For he the power had of confession,
As he would say, more than a young curate.
In his Order he was licentiate.
Full sweetly heard he a confession,
And pleasant was his absolution;
He was an easy man to give penánce
Whene'er he knew he'd have a good pittánce;
For when to a poor friar man gives his best,
It is a sign that man is well confessed.
For if he gave, he boldly dared to say,
He knew a man repentant was that day.
For many a man so hard is in his heart,
He will not weep, although he sorely smart.
Therefore instead of weeping and of prayers,
Men may give silver to the *pauvres frères*.

[1] The four Orders here mentioned are the Dominicans, Franciscans or Grey Friars, the Carmelites or White Friars, and the Augustine or Austin Friars.

[2] Wealthy landholders.

His cowl was always stuffed quite full of knives
And pins, as little gifts for the fair wives.
And certainly he had a merry note;
Well could he sing, and play upon a rote.[1]
For ancient ballads he bore off the prize.
His neck was white as is the fleur-de-lys.
Besides he strong was as a champion.
He knew the taverns well in every town,
And innkeepers and women at the bar,
Far better than a leper or beggár.
For such a one, full worthy as was he,
It did not suit, as by his faculty,
To have acquaintance with poor leprous things.
It's naught becoming, nor advantage brings,
With such poor wretches to associate;
But with the rich, and those who fill your plate.
And everywhere, where profit might be made,
Courteous he was, and humbly gave his aid.
There nowhere was a man so virtuous,
He was the grandest beggar in his house.
For though a widow had not e'en a shoe,
So pleasant was his *In Principio*,
He would from her have something ere he went;
His take in alms was greater than his rent.
And sport he would, as if he were a whelp,
On love-days,[2] when he oft would give much help.
For then he was not like a cloisterer,
With threadbare cope, as is a poor scholar,

[1] A kind of harp, or, as some think, a hurdy-gurdy.

[2] Days appointed for the amicable settlement or arbitration of differences.—*Tyrwhitt.*

But he was like a master or a pope :
Of double worsted was his semy-cope,[1]
Round as a bell when taken from the press.
Somewhat he lispéd in his wantonness,
To make his English sweet upon his tongue;
And in his harping, too, when he had sung,
His eyes they twinkled in his head aright,
As tiny stars do on a frosty night.
And Huberd was this worthy beggar's name.
A Merchant was there with forked beard, the same
In motley robe, high on his horse he sat,
Upon his head a Flanders beaver hat;
His boots were claspéd well and tastefully.
Opinions gave he with solemnity,
Respecting alway sales profitable.
He would the sea from raids piratical
Were free, 'twixt Middleburgh and Orewelle.[2]
Well could he in exchange French money sell.
This worthy man full well his wits employed;
No creature knew he was with debts annoyed,
So dignified he was in managing
His bargains and his plans for borrowing.
Forsooth he was a worthy man withal,
But truly, I know not his name at all.
A Clerk[3] there was from Oxford College come,
Who logic liked to study when at home—

[1] A short upper cloak or cape.

[2] Middleburgh is still a well-known port of the island of Walcheren, almost immediately opposite Harwich, beside which are the estuaries of the rivers Stoure and Orewelle.—*Morris.*

[3] A University student, but is also used to signify a man of learning.

As lean his horse it was as is a rake,
And he was not right fat, I undertake;
But hollow looked and sad. His coat as well
Was threadbare, and of coarse material.
For he ne'er yet had had a benefice,
Nor was so worldly as to have office.
For he would rather have at his bed's head
Some twenty books, all bound in black or red,
Of Aristotle and philosophy,
Than robes full rich, fiddle, or psaltery.
But though he was a grave philosopher,
He had but little gold in his coffer;
But all that he could get from any friend,
On books, and on learning, he soon would spend.
And busily began to pray for souls
Of them that gave him money for the schools,
In studying he took much care and heed.
Not one word spake he more than there was need,
And that he spake, was said with reverence,
And short and terse, and full of shrewd good sense.
Tending to moral virtue was his speech,
And gladly would he learn and gladly teach.
A Sergeant of the Law, wary and wise,
Whom in the porch[1] men sought them to advise,
There was also, full rich in excellence,
Discreet he was, and held in reverence:
Learnéd he seemed, his words, too, were so wise,
Justice he was, full often, of assize,
By patent and by full commission;
For his learning and for his high renown,

[1] At the church porch or portico of St. Paul's, where the lawyers were wont to meet for consultation.—*Morris.*

Of fees and robes had he full many a one,
So great a purchaser was nowhere known.
All was to him fee-simple; not a word
Against his purchases was ever heard;
There never was so busy a man as he,
And, busier than he was, he seemed to be.
In cases and decisions was he schooled,
That from King William's time the Courts had ruled.
Besides, he could indite and write a thing,
That no one could find fault with his writing.
And every statute knew he well by rote.
He rode, a lonely man, in riding coat
Girt with a silken belt with ornaments;[1]
I say no more of his habiliments.
A Franklin[2] followed in his company:
White was his beard as is the daïsy;
His countenance was ruddy and benign;
Well loved he in the morn a sop in wine;[3]
His life in pleasure he allowed to pass,
For he a son of Epicurus was,
Who held opinion, that of real pleasúre
Was perfect happiness the true measúre.
A householder, and a great man was he;
St. Julian[4] he was in his countrý.

[1] The girdles were usually ornamented with small ornaments.

[2] A man of considerable possessions.

[3] In Harl. MS. 279, fol. 10, we find instructions for making these sops. "Take milk and boil it and then take yolks of eggs without the white, and heat it, but let it not boil, and stir it well till it be somewhat thick; then cast in salt and sugar and cut fair 'paindemaynes' into round 'soppys' and cast the 'soppys' thereon, and serve it forth for a potage."—*Way* in "Promptorium Parvulorum," p. 378.

[4] St. Julian was eminent for providing his votaries with lodging

His bread and ale you could have after one;[1]
No man with better store of wine was known.
Without baked meats was never known his house,
With flesh and fish and that so plenteous,
His house abounded both with meat and drink,
And all dainties of which a man could think.
According to the seasons of the year,
So changéd he his meat and his supper.
Full many a partridge had he in a mew,[2]
And many a bream and many a pike in stew.[3]
Sad was his cook, unless the sauce had been
Piquant and sharp, and his utensils clean.
His table standing[4] in his hall alway,
Was ready covered all throughout the day.
At sessions he appeared the lord and sire.
And full ofttimes he knight was of the shire.
A dagger, and a purse, made all of silk,
Hung at his girdle, white as morning milk.

---

and accommodation of all sorts. In the title of his legend, Bodl. MS. 1596, fol. 4, he is called "St. Julian the gode herberjour." It ends thus:

Therefore yet to this day they that over lond wende,
They biddeth St. Julian anon that gode herborw he hem sende:
And Seint Julianes Paternoster ofte seggeth also
For his fader soule and his modere's, that he hem bring thereto.
—*Tyrwhitt.*

[1] One o'clock.

[2] Was the coop wherein fowl were fattened. [3] Fish-pond.

[4] "Previous to the fourteenth century a pair of common wooden trestles, and a rough plank was deemed a table sufficient for the great hall. Tables with a board attached to a frame were introduced about the time of Chaucer, and from remaining in the hall, were regarded as indications of a ready hospitality."—*Our English Home*, p. 30.

A sheriff had he been, accountant, too;
No better man was seen the whole land through.
A Haberdasher and a Carpenter,
A Weaver, Dyer, and Upholsterer,
And they were clothéd all in livery
Of an important great fraternity.[1]
Full fresh and new was their apparel trimmed;
Their dagger-sheaths were not with copper rimmed,
But all with silver, wrought full clean and well;
Their girdles and their pouches, too, as well.
For each did seem a worthy citizen
To sit in a guildhall above his men.[2]
And each, too, for the wisdom he had shown,
Was fit to wear an aldermanic gown.
Of cattle had they quite enough, and rent,[3]
And eke their wives would quickly give assent;
Or else for sure they would be much to blame—
It is full fair to be yclept *madame*,
And to attend at vigils frequently,
And have a mantle borne full regally.[4]
A Cook they had for the occasion,
To boil their chickens, with the marrow bone,

[1] An evident reference to the guilds of the Middle Ages.

[2] To sit on the raised platform always found at the upper end of a hall, on which was placed the table or seat of distinction.

[3] A sufficient income to qualify him to be Alderman.

[4] It was the custom in those days, on the eve of a festival, for the parishioners to meet in the churches or churchyards and to have drinking bouts there. Here they used to end many quarrels betwixt neighbour and neighbour, and hitherto came the wives in comely manner, and they of the better sort had their mantles carried with them, some for show and some to keep them from cold.—*Speght.*

And spices tart, and eke with galingale.[1]
Well could he tell a draught of London ale.[2]
And he could roast, and boil, and broil, and fry,
Make potted meat and well could bake a pie.
But sad it was, and so it seemed to me,
That on his chin a gangrened sore had he.
A blancmanger[3] he made quite of the best.
A Sailor was there coming from the West:
For ought I wot, he was from Dartmouth town.
He rode upon a hackney, in a gown
Of coarsest cloth, which fell down to the knee.
A dagger hanging on a belt had he,
Around his neck beneath his arm adown.
The hot summer had made his visage brown;
And certainly he was a good comráde.
Full many a draught of wine, so it is said,
He stole from Bordeaux, while the merchant slept.
Of too nice conscience little heed he kept.
Whene'er he fought and had the upper hand,
He sent his foes back home to every land.
But of his skill, to reckon well his tides,
The ocean streams, the shoals and rocks besides,
His harbours, and his moon, and pilotage,
There was none such from Hull town to Carthage.
Hardy, and wise in what he undertook;
Full many a fierce tempest his long beard shook.

[1] The root of the sweet cyperus.—*Morris.*

[2] This ale was famous as early as the time of Henry III., and much higher-priced than other ales.—*Morris.*

[3] One of the ingredients is described as "the brawne of a capon cut small."—*Tyrwhitt*, GL.

He knew well all the havens as they were,
From Jutland to the Cape of Finistere,
And every creek in Britain and in Spain.
His barge yclepéd was the Magdeléne.
With us there was a Doctor of Physíc,
In all the world no one like him could speak
Of physic, and the laws of surgery;
For he was grounded in astronomy.
He kept his patients wonderfully well
In hours[1] propitious made by magic spell.
Well could he make th' ascendant fortunate,
And stars auspicious to his patient's state.
He knew the cause of every malady,
And were you hot, or cold, or moist, or dry,
How 'twas engendered, and of what humour;
He was a perfect skilled practitioner.
The cause he knew, and of each pain the root,
And to the sick man soon he gave his boot.
Full ready had he his apothecaries
To send him drugs and his electuaries.
For each of them the other's profit made;
Their friendship was not new begun, 'twas said.
Well knew he the old Esculapius,[2]
And Deiscorides and eke Rufus;
Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;
Serapyon, Razis, and Avycen;
Averrois, Damascien, and Constantyn;
Bernard and Gatesden, and Gilbertyn.

[1] Astrological hours. A great portion of the medical science of the Middle Ages depended upon astrological and other superstitious observances.—*Wright.*

[2] The principal medical authorities of the Middle Ages.

C

In diet he was moderate withal,
No superfluity was there at all,
But nourishing, and food digestible.
Yet little studied he of his Bible.
In blood red and in blue, all clad was he,
Lined with thin silk or else with taffety.
And yet he lived not at a great expense,
But kept his gains made in the pestilence.[1]
For gold in physic is a cordial,
Therefore he lovéd gold especial.
A Good-wife was there, who from Bath had come,
But somewhat deaf was she; and when at home
Skilled was in clothmaking, in which she spent
Her time, and outdid them of Ypres and Ghent.[2]
In all the town no wives were ever known
To give their offerings[3] before her own,
And if they did, so surely wroth was she,
This good-wife lost all sense of charity.
Her kerchiefs[4] were of texture very fine
(I dare to swear they'd weigh of pounds full nine),
That on a Sunday were upon her head.
Her hosen were of finest scarlet red,
Full closely tied, her shoes full soft and new;
Bold was her face, and fair, and red of hue.

[1] This alludes to the pestilence in the years 1348, 1349.—*Morris.*

[2] The West of England, and especially the neighbourhood of Bath, was long famous as the district of cloth-making, while Ypres and Ghent were the great clothing marts on the Continent.—*Morris & Wright.*

[3] This alludes to the offering on Relic Sunday, when the congregation went up to the altar in succession to kiss the relics.—*Morris.*

[4] The kerchief was a covering for the head, and was often thickly ornamented.

She was a worthy woman all her life,
Of husbands at church-door[1] she had had five.

* * * *

And thrice had she been at Jerusalem;
She had crossed over many a foreign stream;
At Rome, too, had she been, and at Boulogne,
In Galice[2] at St. James, and at Cologne.
And she had wandered much, too, on the way.
Lascivious she was, the truth to say.
Upon an ambler easily she sat,
Her neck well covered, on her head a hat,
As broad as is a buckler or a targe;
The petticoat around her hips was large,
And on her feet a pair of spurs full sharp.
And, when with friends, well could she laugh and carp.
Some remedies for love she had, perchance,
For of that art she knew the "olden dance."
A good man was there of religion,
Who was a needy Parson of a town;
But rich he was in holy thought and work.
He also was a learned man, a clerk.
The holy Gospel would he truly preach,
And his parishioners devoutly teach.
Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
And in adversity full patient;

[1] The priest married the couple at the church porch, and then proceeded to the altar to celebrate mass, at which the newly-married persons communicated.—*Morris.*

[2] In Galicia, at St. James of Compostella, a famous resort of pilgrims in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.—*Morris.*

That this was so, full oftentimes was shown.
To excommunicate for tithes was known
To be but loath, and rather would he give,
And help his poor parishioners to live
Out of his alms and, eke, of his income;
He could be satisfied with less at home.
Wide was his parish, with the houses set
Apart; but he, for thunder or for wet,
Ne'er ceased, in sickness or in grief, to go
To farthest end, to visit high or low,
On foot and alway with his staff in hand.
He gave his sheep, too, this ensample grand,
That first he wrought and afterward he taught.
He from the holy Gospel these words caught;
And this figure he added eke thereto,
If gold doth rust, what must the iron do?
For if a priest be foul, on whom we trust,
No wonder that an untaught man should rust!

* * * *

Well should a priest a good example give,
By his own conduct, how his sheep should live.
He suffered none his benefice to hire,
Nor left his sheep encumbered in the mire,
Nor ran he up to London to St. Paul's,
To seek a chantry there for founders' souls,[1]

[1] An endowment for the payment of a priest to sing mass agreeably to the appointment of the founder.—*Morris.*

Thirty-five of these charities were established at St. Paul's, being served by fifty-four priests.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Or by a brotherhood to be maintained;
But dwelt at home, and well his fold sustained,
So that the wolf no entrance could obtain;
He was a shepherd, and looked not for gain.
And though he holy were and virtuous,
He was to sinful man full piteous,
And in his speech was affable and sweet,
And, when he taught, benignant and discreet.
To draw mankind to heaven by gentleness
And good example was his business;
But were there any person obstinate,
Whether he were of high or low estate,
Him would he sharply snub, and set him down.
A better priest, I trow, was nowhere known.
He did not wait on pomp or reverence,
Nor yet had he a spicéd conscience.
Doctrines of Christ and of the Twelve he taught,
But first, to follow them himself, he sought.
With him a Ploughman, his own brother, rode,
Who had of dung removed full many a load;
A labourer, both good and true, was he,
Living in peace and perfect charity.
God loved he best alway with all his heart,
(And were he happy or with pain did smart),
And then his neighbour as himself he loved.
Well could he thrash, or dig, as it behoved
A man for Christ's sake, looking not for pay,
And help the poor, as in his power might lay.
His tithes he ever paid full fair and well
On produce of his labour and cattle.
In a smock frock he rode upon a mare.
A Steward and a Miller, too, were there,

With an Apparitor,[1] a Pardoner,
A Manciple,[2] myself, and none other.
The Miller was a stout carle and not slim,
He was full big in muscle and in limb;
And proved it well, for everywhere he came
At wrestling he would always have the Ram.[3]
He was high-shouldered, broad, and powerful,
A door he would soon from its hinges pull,
Or running at it break in with his head:
His beard as any sow or fox was red,
And broad besides, as though it were a spade.
Upon the topmost of his nose was laid
A wart, and thereon stood a tuft of hair,
Red as the bristles of an old sow's ear.
Again, his nostrils were both black and wide;
A sword and buckler bare he by his side;
His mouth as wide was as a furnace door.
Buffoon he was, and babbler—what is more,
A sinful man, and full of ribaldries.
For stealing corn, a sad repute was his;
And yet he had a thumb of gold,[4] 'tis true.
He wore a white coat and a hood of blue.
A bagpipe could he blow, and make, when blown,
Resound; and with it brought us out of town.

[1] An officer appointed to summon delinquents to appear in Ecclesiastical Courts.

[2] One who has the office of purchasing provisions for a college or inn of court.

[3] This was the usual prize at wrestling matches.—*Morris.*

[4] This alludes to the old proverb, "Every honest miller has a thumb of gold."

The Temple Manciple comes next in turn,
From whom and whose example men might learn,
And thereby gain experience and aid.
For whether he on credit bought, or paid,
In making purchases he ne'er was late,
But bought his goods in time and in good state.
Now is not that of God a full fair grace,
That such an untaught man's wit should outpace
The wisdom of a heap of learned men?
Of masters had he more than three times ten,
Expert in law, acute, and cautious,
Of whom there were a dozen in that house,
Full worthy to be stewards of the land
Of any nobleman within Engländ,
To make him live on his own property,
And without debts, unless he mad should be,
Or frugally, if he should so desire;
And men who able were to help the shire,
In any case that might hap or befal;
And yet this Manciple, he capped them all.
The Steward was a slender, angry man,
His beard was shorn as near as e'er it can
Be cut. His hair was cropped, to say the least,
Full short. His scalp was docked like any priest.
Full long his legs they were, and wondrous lean,
And like a staff, for sure no calf was seen.
Well could he watch the garner or the bin,
And over him no auditor could win.
Well knew he by the drought or by the rain
The yielding of his seed and of his grain.
His master's sheep, and oxen, and the cows,
His horses, stock, and poultry, and the sows,

Were wholly under this man's management,
Who gave a reckoning by his covenant,
E'er since his master's age reached twenty years;
And no man could accuse him of arrears.
There was no bailiff, herdsman, or a hind,
Whose cunning tricks he did not bear in mind;
They were of him as frightened as of death.
His dwelling was full fair upon a heath,
And shaded, too, with green trees was the place.
Far better than his lord could he purchase.
Much wealth he had amassèd secretly.
Well could he please his master craftily,
And give and lend to him of his own goods,
And be well thanked, and yet have coats and hoods.
In youth he was a carpenter by trade;
Nor of the most skilled workman was afraid.
This Steward rode a horse right good and game,
That was of dappled gray, and Scot its name.
A lengthy overcoat of blue he had,
And by his side he bore a rusty blade.
From Norfolk was this man, of whom I tell,
Beside a town which men call Baldeswelle.
Wrapped as he was, he might for friar have passed,
And of us all, he always rode the last.
Next, an ~~Apparitor~~ Summoner was in that place
With us, who had a ruddy cherub's face,
And pimpled was he, and had narrow eyes;
And sharp he was, as sparrows after flies;
With scabby black brows, and a scraggy beard;
And of his face the children were afeard.
No white lead, or quicksilver, or brimstone,
Borax, or oil of tartar, was there known,

Or any ointment, that would cleanse and bite,
Which could relieve him of his blotches white,
Or of the pimples sitting on his cheeks;
Well loved he garlic, onions, and leeks,
And eke to drink strong wine when he were dry.
Then would he speak, and like a madman cry.
And when he had well drunken, not a word
But Latin, he to speak was ever heard.
A few terms had he, just some two or three,
That he had learnéd out of some decree;
No wonder, for he heard them all the day;
And eke you all know well how that a jay
Can call out "Watte," as well as can the best.
But people who could put him to the test,
Soon found he'd spent all his philosophy.
Ay, *Quæstio quid juris*,[1] would he cry.
He was a ribald youth, and eke was kind;
A better fellow could men nowhere find.

* * * *

And if he fell in with a good comráde,
He soon would teach him not to stand in dread,
In any case, of the archdeacon's curse,
Unless indeed a man's soul were his purse;
Punished in purse he would most surely be.
"The purse is the archdeacon's hell," quoth he.
But well I know he lied in what he said;
The guilty should of curses be afraid;
For curses slay, as absolutions save,
And make mankind think how they should behave.

[1] A customary question in old law writings, after the statement of a case.

Under complete control of his office,
Were all the young girls of the diocese;
He gave them counsel and assistance too.
A garland had he on his head, 'tis true,
As large as on a sign-post you may see,
A buckler, too, made out of cake had he.
With him there rode a gentle Pardoner
From Rouncivale, his friend and follower,
Who straight was coming from the Holy See.
Full loud he sang, "Come hither, love, to me."
His friend sang with him in a dismal drone;
No trumpet ever brayed in such a tone.
This Pardoner had hair the tint of wax,
But smooth it lay, as doth a wisp of flax;
In quantities his locks hung from his head,
And therewith were his shoulders overspread,
Though thin it lay, in mere shreds, one by one.
Of hood, in sportive mood, he did wear none,
For it was in his wallet packed awhile.
He thought he rode in quite the newest style,
With his hair loose, and save his cap, all bare.
Such glaring eyes he had as hath a hare.
A vernicle[1] he had sown on his cap.
His wallet lay before him on his lap,
Brim-full of pardons come from Rome all hot.
A voice he had as small as goats have got.

[1] A miniature copy of the picture of Christ, which is said to have been miraculously imprinted on the handkerchief of St. Veronica, preserved now in the Church of St. Peter at Rome. The Pardoner therefore brings this in token of his pilgrimage to Rome.—*Tyrwhitt.*

No beard had he, nor ever would he have one,
You'd think his face had been but lately shaven.
I think he rode a gelding or a mare.
But of his craft, from Berwick unto Ware,
There ne'er was such another Pardoner;
For in his bag he had some white cover,
Which he pretended was Our Lady's veil.
He said he had a fragment of the sail
Used by St. Peter, when, on Galilee,
Ere Jesus called him, he went out to sea.
He had a cross of brass all set with stones,
And in a glass he had some old pig's bones.
But with these relics, when he met by chance
A poor incumbent dwelling in his manse,
In one day he of money took far more
Than that same parson got in days threescore;
And thus, with tricks and feignéd flattery,
He made of priest and people fools alway.
But, truth to tell, I may say, at the least,
He was in church indeed a noble priest.
Well could he read a lesson or a story,
But best of all he sang an offertory;
For well he knew that when that song was sung
He'd have to preach and glib be with his tongue
To win the silver, as he well could do;
Therefore he sang full merry, loud, and true.

Now have I told you shortly, in a clause,
The rank, array, and number, and the cause,
Which had together brought this company
To Southwark, at the pleasant hostelry
"The Tabard" called, and standing by "The Belle."
But now I think it is the time to tell

How we amused ourselves throughout the night,
When we did at that hostelry alight;
And then I will relate of our voyáge,
And aught remaining of our pilgrimage.
But first I pray you of your courtesy
Do not ascribe it to a wish to lie,
If, though I fully speak, and here relate
To you their words, and looks, and their estate,
I yet should not their words speak properly;
For this you all know, full as well as I,
Who would relate after another man
Must truly state, as nigh as e'er he can,
Each word he hears; and that, too, by the way,
E'en when he has unpleasant things to say;
Or else he must so make his tale untrue,
Or add to it, inventing something new.
He must not spare although it were his brother,
But should as soon say one word as the other.
Christ spake himself full broad in Holy Writ,
And well ye know there's nothing bad in it.
And Plato saith,[1] as he who can should read,
"Words must be in accordance with the deed."
Also I pray you, be not hard on me,
If I have not set out in their degree
The people in this tale, as they should stand;
My skill's at fault, you well may understand.
Right well our landlord treated everyone,
And to our supper set us down anon,
And served us all with food quite of the best;
Strong was the wine, and stinted not the least.

[1] This saying is taken from Boethius de Consolatione, lib. iii.

A seemly man our host appeared withal,
Fit to have been a marshal in a hall;
Large was he, too, with eyes full bright and brown,
A fairer burgess was there none in town.
Bold in his speech, and wise, he was well taught,
And certes in manliness he lackéd naught.
And then again he was a merry man,
And after supper he to joke began.
And talked of merry times and other things,
As soon as we had paid our reckonings.
And speaking thus: "Lo, lords, most truthfully
Ye are right welcome, yea, and heartily:
For by my troth, unless I do but lie,
I have not seen so gay a company
This year, at one time, in this house as now.
Fain would I make you glad, did I know how.
A merry thing there is, of which I've thought,
Which would amuse you and yet cost you naught.
You go to Canterbury; God you speed,
And may the martyr grant you all you need!
And as you journey on, I know full well,
You each will make your plans, and tales will tell;
For truly of amusement there is none,
To ride along the road dumb as a stone.
And so to give you some diversion,
I will here make you a suggestion.
And if you all agree with one consent,
To trust yourselves to me and my judgmént,
And (as I shall propose), to spend your days,
To-morrow when ye ride off on your ways,
Now by my father's soul—and he is dead—
But ye will merry be, I'll stake my head.

Hold up your hands without another word."
We soon consented, for no one demurred;
We thought it better far to treat him so,
And granting what he asked without ado,
We bade him tell us what he would suggest.
"Lordlings," quoth he, "now listen at your best,
But treat me not, I pray you, with disdain;
This is the point, to put it short and plain,
That each of you,—and see that no one fails,—
On this your journey, shall relate two tales,
I mean 'twixt here and Canterbury two,
And homeward-bound shall tell two more also,
About adventures and adversities.
And he of you who most successful is,
That is to say, shall tell his tales the best,
(And good sound sense and fun shall be the test),
Shall have a supper at the others' cost,
Here in this place while sitting by this post,
As soon as we from Canterbury come.
To give you pleasure, will I leave my home,
And will myself most gladly with you ride,
At my own cost too, and will be your guide.
And whoso dares my judgment to gainsay,
Shall pay all our expenses by the way;
And if ye will agree to what ye've heard,
Tell me anon, without another word,
And I will make my plans accordingly."
This was agreed, and swore we faithfully
With full glad hearts, and him besought indeed,
That he would thence vouchsafe to take the lead,
And would of our affairs director be,
And of our tales the judge and referee,

And set a supper at a certain price;
And we would ruléd be by his advice
In high and low; and, thus with one consent,
We promised to abide by his judgmént.
And thereupon of wine was fetched the best,
And, after we had drunk, we went to rest,
And that without much longer tarrying.
The morrow when the dawn did first begin,
Up rose our host, and acted as the cock,[1]
And gathered us together in a flock,
And forth we rode, at no great pace it was,
Unto the watering of Saint Thomás.
And there to rest his horse our host began,
And thus addressed us: "Hearken if ye can;
Ye know your promise, which I here record,—
If evensong and morning-song accord,—[2]
Let us now see who first shall tell a tale.
As ever must I drink or wine or ale,
Whoso rebellious is to my judgmént,
Shall pay for all that by the way is spent.
So now draw lots, ere we proceed from hence,
And he, who draws the shortest, shall commence."
"Sir Knight," quoth he, "my master and my lord,
Now draw, for so you must, I give my word;
And come," quoth he, "my Lady Prioress;
And you, Sir Clerk, let be your bashfulness,
Nor study that: lay hand now, every man."
And forthwith each of them to draw began,

[1] Awoke us all.

[2] If you are of the same opinion this morning as you were last evening.

And shortly here to tell you how it was,
And how by fate or luck it came to pass,
The truth is this, the lot fell to the Knight,
And this was hailed with pleasure and delight;
And so to tell a tale he was compelled,
As being to his oath and bargain held
As ye have heard. What need of words from me?
When this good man consented cheerfully,
As one who wise is, and obedient,
To keep his word and show his free assent.
He said: "As I shall first begin the game,
Well! welcome be the lot, and in God's name!
Now let us ride, and hearken what I say."
And, at his word, we rode forth on our way;
And he began, with merry mien and bold,
His tale to tell, and spake as here is told.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

ONCE on a time, as stories tell to us,
There was a duke, who, naméd Theseüs,[1]
Of Athens was the lord and governor;
And in his time was such a conqueror,
That greater was there none under the sun.
Full many a wealthy country had he won,
And by his wisdom and his chivalry
He conquered all that part of Fémenye,[2]
That formerly was calléd Scythia;
And married, too, the Queen Hippolyta,
And brought her home with him to his country,
With much of glory and solemnity,
And eke her younger sister Emily.
And thus, with much pomp and with victory,
I leave this noble duke to make his way
To Athens with his host in great array.
  And surely, were it not too long to tell,
I would have told you how that it befell,

[1] For an account of the *Theseida* of Boccace, of which Chaucer largely availed himself, see Tyrwhitt's *Introduction*, § ix.
[2] The kingdom of the Amazons.

That conquered was the land of Fémenye
By Theseüs and by his chivalry;
And of the bloody battle fought between
Athenians and Amazons, I ween;
And how besiegéd was Hippolyta,
The fair and hardy Queen of Scythia;
And of the feast there was at her weddíng,
And of the tempest at her home-comíng.
But of these things I cannot tell you now,
I have, God knows, an ample field to plough,
And weak my oxen are, and their work rough;
The remnant of this tale is long enough.
I shall not hinder anyone, you'll learn,
But let each fellow tell his tale in turn,
And let us see who shall this supper win;
And where I ceased, I will again begin.
This noble duke, to whom I've made you known,
When he had almost come unto the town,
In all his great prosperity and pride,
He was aware, on glancing on one side,
That there were kneeling in extended row
A company of ladies, two and two,
Along the road, all in black clothes arrayed;
And such a wailing and a fuss they made,
That in this world no living creature has
Heard such another weeping as this was;
And in their crying never would they cease,
Nor, till they'd seized his reins, give any peace.
"What folk be ye, who, at my home-comíng,
Do thus disturb my fête with your weepíng?"
Quoth Theseüs. "Are you so envious
All of my honour, that you cry out thus?

Or what insult is it that you've received?
Now answer me how you may be relieved,
And tell me why you are all clothed in black?"
The eldest lady of them all then spake,
(As she recovered from a fainting fit,
With face all pale, and sad to see was it;)
And said she, "Lord, to whom Fortune doth give
Success, and as a conqueror to live,
Nought grieveth us your glory and honóur;
But we beseech for mercy and succóur.
Have mercy on our woe and our distress;
Some drop of pity, of thy gentleness,
On us poor women, oh! allow to fall.
For surely, lord, there is none of us all,
Who hath not been a duchess or a queen;
But now we wretched are, as can be seen,
Thanks be to Fortune, and to her false wheel,
In which none dare full confidence to feel.
Thus, lord, we did abide here your presénce,
In this the temple of the good Cleménce,
And have been waiting all the fortnight past;
Help us, my lord, if but the power thou hast.
I, wretched that I am, who waileth thus,
Was once the wife of King Capāneüs,[1]
Who died at Thebes,—and curséd be that day,—
And all of us, who are in this array,
And who do make this lamentation,
We all did lose our husbands at that town,

[1] I have, for the reasons given in the Preface, adhered in great part to Chaucer's own pronunciation of the classical proper names to be found in these tales, instead of adopting the more modern form.

Whilst the besieging army round it lay.
And then it was, old Creon, well-a-day!
Who now is lord of Thebes, oh! sad city!
Filled full of anger and iniquity,
For malice sake, out of sheer villainy,—
To treat the poor dead bodies shamefully
Of all our husbands, who had thus been slain, —
He had the bodies heaped up on the plain,
And would not suffer, as we sadly learnt,
That they might either buried be or burnt,
But made hounds eat them, such his angry state."
And as she spake, unable more to wait,
They grovelling fell, and cried out piteously,
"Have on us wretched women some mercy,
And let our grief be in thy memory kept."
This noble duke down from his courser leapt
With doleful heart, when thus these words she spake.
And, true it is, he thought his heart would break,
When he saw them so sad and desolate,
Who formerly had been of high estate.
And with his hands he helped them all to rise,
And gave them comfort till they ceased their cries;
And swore an oath, so far as in his might
Did lie, he would, as he was a true knight,
Such vengeance on the tyrant Creon wreak,
That all inhabitants of Greece should speak
Of it, and say how Creon had been served,
And how he'd met his death so well deserved.
And right anon, and without more delay,
His banner he unfurled, and rode away
To Thebes, with all his army him beside;
No nearer Athens would he go nor ride,

Nor even take a rest for half a day,
But onward on his way that night he lay;
And sent at once the Queen Hippolyta,
And Emily her young and fair sister,
Unto the town of Athens, there to dwell;
And forth he rode; there is no more to tell.
The red statue of Mars with spear and targe
So bright shone in his banner white and large,
The whole field glittered in the sun at morn;
And with his banner was his pennant borne,
Of gold full rich, and on it worked full neat
The Minotaur, whom he had slain in Crete.
Thus rode this duke, thus rode this conqueror,
And in his host full many a warrior,
Until he came to Thebes, and did alight
Fair in a field wherein he thought to fight.
But shortly here to tell you of this thing—
With Creon, who of Thebes was then the king,
He fought, and slew him manly as a knight,
In good fair fight, and put his men to flight;
And by assault he next the city won,
And wall, and spar, and rafter knocked he down
And to the ladies he restored again
The bones of all their husbands who were slain,
To bury them with proper pomp and state.
But it were all too long here to relate
The clamour and the bitter sorrowing,
Which these poor ladies made at the burníng
Of the dead bodies, and the great honóur
That Theseüs, this noble conqueror,
Did to the ladies, when they from him went.
But shortly this to tell is my intent.

When that this worthy duke, this Theseüs,
Had Creon slain, and Thebes had conquered thus,
Still on the field he took at night his rest,
And with the country did what pleased him best.
In ransacking among the heap of slain,
And stripping off their arms in search of gain,
The plunderers worked hard, you may be sure,
After the battle and discomfiture.
And so befell it, 'mongst the dead they found,
Pierced through and through with many a grievous wound,
Two youthful knights, somewhat apart they lay,
Both armed alike, and arms full rich were they;
And of these two, Arcite was named the one,
The other knight was calléd Palamon.
Not quite alive, nor fully dead were they;
But by their armour and equipments gay
The heralds knew them well, especially
As they were of the royal family
Of Thebes; and of two sisters were they born.
From out the heap the plunderers had torn
These two, and had them carried to the tent
Of Theseus, and he full soon them sent
To Athens, there in prison to remain
For ever, nor for ransom could they gain
Their freedom. When the duke this thing had done,
He took his host, and home he rode anon,
With laurel crowned, as is a conqueror;
And there he lived in joy and in honóur
For all his life, suffice it here to say;
And in a tower, all sad and woeful, lay
This Palamon and Arcite his comráde
For evermore, and gold brought them no aid.

Thus passéd year by year and day by day,
Till it befell one morning bright in May
That Emily, who fairer was, I ween,
Than is the lily on her stalk so green,
And fresher than the May with flowerets new,—
For with the tint of roses vied her hue;
I know not which was fairer of the two.—
Ere it were day, as was her wont to do,
She had arisen, and was ready dressed,
For May will not allow a lengthened rest.
The season stimulates each gentle heart,
And makes mankind up from his sleep to start,
And says, "Arise, and thine observance do."[1]
And this made Emily remember, too,
To honour May, and rise ere it were late.
All freshly clothed she was, the truth to state;
Her golden hair was braided in a tress
Behind her back, a full yard long, I guess.
She in the garden, with the rising sun,
Walked up and down, and ever and anon
She gathered flowerets partly white and red,
And made a subtle garland for her head,
And sweetly as an angel sang a song.
The noble tower, which was so thick and strong,
And of the castle was the chief donjón,
(And where the knights were shut up in prisón,
Of whom I told you, and of whom I shall
Have more to tell), adjoined the garden wall,
Near which this Emily played like a child.
Bright was the sun, and clear the morn and mild,

[1] Compare *Midsummer Night's Dream:* "To do observance to a morn of May"—Act i. Scene 1, l. 168.—*Morris.*

And Palamon, this woeful prisoner,
As was his wont, by leave of his gaoler,
Was risen, and walking in his room on high,
From which he saw the noble city nigh
At hand, and eke the garden full of trees,
Where Emily the fair thus at her ease
Was walking and was roaming up and down.
This woeful prisoner, this Palamon,
Was in his chamber roaming to and fro,
And to himself complaining of his woe;
That he was born, full oft he said, Alas!
It so befell, by chance or luck it was,
That through the window, thick with many a bar
Of iron large and square as any spar,[1]
He cast his eyes upon Emilia,[2]
And forthwith starting back he called out, Ah!
As though he had been stung right through the heart.
And at that cry up quick did Arcite start,
And say, "O cousin mine, what aileth thee,
That thou so death-like art and pale to see?
Why didst thou cry? Who hath offended thee?
For love of God, bear alway patiently
Our prison life, for changed it cannot be;
Fortune hath brought us this adversity.
Some evil aspect or position
Of Saturn with some constellation,

[1] A square wooden bolt; here meaning that the bars which were of iron were as thick as they would have had to be if wooden.—*Morris.*

[2] Chaucer appears constantly to have altered the termination of his proper names as required for the sake of the rhyme or otherwise.

Hath been the cause, although we had it sworn
The heavens propitious were when we were born:
We must submit, to put it short and plain."
  This Palamon answered, and said again,
"Cousin, forsooth in this opinion
Thou hast no wise imagination.
These prison walls they caused me not to cry;
But I was hurt just now right through mine eye
Into my heart, and baneful will it be.
The beauty of that lady, whom I see
In yonder garden roaming to and fro,
The cause is of my crying and my woe.
Who knows if she be woman or goddéss?
But Venus is it, as I truly guess."
And thereupon he fell down on his knees,
And said: "O Venus, if it now doth please
Thee in this garden thus to transfigúre
Thyself in sight of such a sad creatúre,
Out of this prison help us to escape.
And if the gods my destiny should shape,
That I must by their word in prison die,
For all our lineage have some pity,
That have been brought so low by tyranny."
  And as he ceased Arcite began to spy
Who was the lady roaming to and fro.
And at the sight her beauty hurt him so,
That if that Palamon were wounded sore,
Arcite was hurt as much as he, or more.
And, with a sigh, he said full piteously:
"The fresh beauty hath slain me suddenly
Of her who roameth now in yonder place;
Unless I have her pity and her grace,

So that I may at least her sometimes see,
I am but dead: there is no more for me
To say." This Palamon when that he heard
These words, looked very wrathful and answered:
"Or speakest thou in earnest or in jest?"
"Nay," quoth Arcite, "right truly in earnest.
God help me, I have little wish to play."
This Palamon to knit his brows straightway
Began: "It were for thee no great honóur,"
Quoth he, "or to be false or a traitór
To me, who art thy cousin and thy brother;
For pledged were we the one unto the other,
That never, e'en had we to die in pain,
Till death itself should come to part us twain,
Would either try in love to thwart the other,
Or eke in any case, my own dear brother;
But rather thou should'st truly further me
In every case, and I should further thee.
This was thine oath and mine, the truth to say;
I know right well, thou dar'st not tell me nay.
Thus dost thou know my will, there is no doubt,
And now, alas! thou falsely art about
To love my lady, whom I love and try
To serve for ever, till my heart shall die.
But no, false Arcite, thou shalt not do so.
I loved her first and told thee of my woe,
And of my will, and how my brother swore
To further me, as I have said before;
For which, thou as a knight art bound to try
To help me, if it in thy power may lie,
Or else thou art but false, I say with pain."
This Arcite then full proudly spake again.

"Thou wilt," quoth he, "be sooner false than I,
And thou art false I tell thee utterly.
For *par amour*[1] I loved her first ere thou.
What wilt thou say? Thou knowest not e'en now,
Whether she be a woman or goddéss.
Thine is affection based on holiness,
But mine is love for a created thing,
And thus I told thee what was happening
To me, as to my cousin and my brother.
I will suppose that thou wast first her lover;
Dost thou not know full well the old clerk's[2] saw,
Who would for lovers ever make a law?
Love is a greater law, deny who can,
Than may be made for any earthly man.
Therefore fixed laws, and all such rules, I say,
By all, for love, are broken every day.
A man must love, however strong his head.
He cannot flee from it, till he be dead,
And whether she be widow, maid, or wife.
And eke it is not likely all thy life,
That thou wilt stand in favour more than I;
For well thou art aware how verily
Both thou and I in prison must remain,
And with no ransom can our freedom gain.
We strive as once the hounds did for the bone,
They fought all day, and yet they each got none;
There came a kite, while that they were so wroth,
And bore away the bone betwixt them both.
And therefore at the king's court, my dear brother,
Each for himself, for law there is none other.

[1] To love exceedingly.
[2] Boethius, from whom much of this story is borrowed.

Love if thou list; I love and alway shall;
And truly, my dear brother, that is all.
Here in this prison must we spend our lives,
And each of us must take what fortune gives."
Great was the strife and long betwixt the two,
Had I but leisure to relate to you;
With this result: It happened on a day,
(To tell it here as shortly as I may,)
A worthy duke who, calléd Pirithous,
And had a friend been of Duke Theseüs,
E'er since they both were children small and weak,
Was come to Athens there his friend to seek,
And be amused, as he was wont of yore,
For in this world he loved no creature more;
And he was loved as dearly in his turn.
So well they loved, as from old books we learn,
That when the one was dead, the truth to tell,
His comrade went and sought for him in hell.[1]
But of that story I've no wish to write.
Duke Pirithous had alway loved Arcite,
And had him known at Thebes from year to year;
And finally at the request and prayer
Of Pirithous, without occasion
For ransom was he let out of prisón,
Freely to go where'er he wished, 'tis true,
But in such wise as I shall tell to you.

[1] The historians disagree with the poets in their accounts about these heroes; but, as Mr. Morris points out, Chaucer here alludes probably to the story of Theseus accompanying Pirithous in his expedition to carry off Proserpine, daughter of Aidoneus, King of the Molosians, when both were taken prisoners, and Pirithous was torn in pieces by the dog Cerberus.

This was the covenant, in short to write
It plain, 'twixt Theseüs and this Arcite:
That if it happened that Arcite were found,
In all his life, by day or night, on ground
In any country of this Theseüs,
And he were caught, it was arrangéd thus,
That with a sword he then should lose his head;
There was no help, and nothing to be said.
And thus he took his leave and homeward sped;
Let him be careful lest his blood be shed.
How great a sorrow suffered now Arcite!
And death he felt right through his heart to smite;
He wept, and wailed, and cried out piteously;
To slay himself he hoped, too, secretly.
"Alàs! the day that I was born!" he swore,
"Now is my prison worse than 'twas before;
'Tis now my fate eternally to dwell,
Not in a purgatory but e'en in hell.
Alas! that I e'er knew this Pirithous,
For else had I still dwelt with Theseüs,
Fettered in prison, ever to remain,
And happy should have been, and not in pain.
Only the sight of her, whom I would serve,
Although I never might her grace deserve,
Would have sufficéd quite enough for me.
O my dear cousin Palamon," quoth he,
"Thine is the victory, and all the gain,
For happy thou in prison canst remain.
In prison? Surely nay, in paradise!
For thee hath fortune well turned up the dice,
Who hast the sight of her in my absénce.
For who can tell? Since thou hast her presénce,

And art a knight who plans can well arrange,
By some good fortune, since our luck doth change,
Thou may'st in time to thy desire attain.
But I, that am exiled, and ne'er again
May hope for grace, am in such great despair,
That neither earth, nor water, fire, nor air,[1]
Nor any creature, that of them made is,
Can bring relief or comfort me in this,
For die I must in great grief and distress!
Farewell my life, and all my happiness!
Ah! why do folk so commonly lament
Their fate by Providence or Fortune sent?
Men thus obtain full oft in many a guise,
Far better things than they could e'er devise.
One man desires to have great wealthiness,
The cause perchance of murder or sickness.
Another would from out his prison come,
Who may be slain in his own house at home.
Infinite harm is often done, 'tis clear;
We never know what we should pray for here.
We fare as he, who drunk is as a mouse;[2]
A drunken man knows well he hath a house,
But he knows not which is the right way home;
He slips too, and his feet unsafe become.
And thus it is that in this world we fare;
We seek to fast to free ourselves from care,
And we go wrong full often in good truth.
Thus may we all admit, and I, forsooth,

[1] The four elements here mentioned were looked upon as the basis of everything.

[2] Or, as we should say, "drunk as a lord."

Who went and had a great opinion,
That if I could escape from my prisón,
Then should I be in joy and ecstasy,
Who am exiled from all prosperity.
And since I may not see you, Emily,
I am but dead; there is no remedy."
Upon the other hand this Palamon,
As soon as he found that Arcite was gone,
Such sorrow showed he, that the dungeon tower
Resounded with his yelling and clamóur.
The fetters e'en, which round his legs were set,
Were quickly with his bitter salt tears wet.
"Alas!" quoth he, "Arcite, O cousin mine,
Of all our strife, God knows, the fruit is thine.
Thou walkest now in Thebes, and free indeed,
And of my woe thou takest little heed.
Thou canst perchance, since thou art brave and wise,
Assemble all our kindred as allies,
And make a war so fierce on this city,
That by some fortune, or by some treaty,
Thou mayest have this lady for thy wife,
For whom I must in sorrow lose my life.
For here to speak of possibility,
Since now thou art at large, and prison free.
And art a lord, thine opportunity
Exceedeth mine, who in this cage must die.
For I must weep and wail, while yet I live,
With all the woe my prison may me give,
And with the pain love bringeth me also,
Which doubleth all my torment and my woe."
Therewith arose the fire of jealousy
Within his breast, and seized him franticly,

Pallid his face and like was to behold
To box-wood or to ashes dead and cold.
Then said he: "Cruel goddess, who rulest
This world at thy divine will and behest,
And written hast on table of adamant,
All your decrees and your eternal grant,
For what is man to be beholden shown,
More than the sheep that in the fold lie down?
For man just as another beast is slain,
And dwelleth eke in prison oft in pain,
And sickness hath, and great adversity,
And guiltless oftentimes, *par Dieu*, is he.
What management is shown in prescience
Which thus tormenteth guiltless innocence?
And yet thus all my penance is increased,
For man, from self-respect, is bound at least
For God's sake alway to restrain his will,
Whereas the beast may every wish fulfil.
And when a beast is dead he hath no pain,
But after death man must weep and complain,
Though in this world he may have care and woe;
Without a doubt it well may happen so.
I leave it to divines to answer this,
But well I know on earth great grief there is.
Alas! I've seen a serpent, or a thief,
Who hath to many a true man done mischief,
Remain at large and go where'er he will,
Whilst I, jealous and mad, in prison still
Must lie, through Saturn in an angry mood,
And Juno, who have shed nigh all the blood
Of Thebes, with all its great wide walls laid low;
While Venus, on her side, hath made me so

Jealous and sad, and of Arcite afraid."
Of Palamon there's nought more to be said;
I leave him in his prison still to dwell,
And of Arcite will here begin to tell.
The summer passed, and, as the nights grew long,
Increaséd twofold was the anguish strong
Both of the lover and the prisoner.
I know not which lot seemed the gloomier,
For, shortly here to put it, Palamon
For evermore condemned was to prisón,
In chains and fetters there to be till dead;
And Arcite, lest he wished to lose his head,
Was exiled evermore from that country,
And ne'er again would he his lady see.
I ask you lovers now this question,
Who had the worst, Arcite or Palamon?
The one might see his lady day by day,
But was in prison forced to dwell alway;
The other, walk or ride might where he would,
But see his lady-love he never could.
Now, as ye please, decide this, ye that can,
For I must tell my tale that I began.
As soon as Arcite had at Thebes arrived,
He fainted oft, and sick at heart he lived,
For he could ne'er his lady see again.
And shortly here to tell you of his pain,
So great a sorrow ne'er was borne by man,
Who is, or has been since the world began.
He could not sleep, no appetite had he,
So that he lean became and sad to see.
His sunken eyes were dreadful to behold,
His hue as pale as ashes are when cold.

He solitary was, and lived alone,
And wailed throughout the night with many a moan;
And, if he heard a song or music played,
He would so weep, his tears could not be stayed,
So feeble were his spirits and so low;
And changed so was his voice, that none could know
That it was he who spake, though they him heard.
In manner he, for all the world, appeared,
Not like to one who hath the malady
Of Eros,[1] rather of insanity.

* * * *

And shortly was he turned all upside down
In habits and in disposition,
This Arcite was in such a woeful state.
Why should I of his woes all day relate?
When he had suffered for a year or two
This cruel torment and this pain and woe
At Thebes, in his own country, as I've said,
One night, as he to sleep had down him laid,
He fancied that the winged god Mercury
Before him stood, and bade him merry be.
His wand, which giveth sleep, he bore upright,
A hat he wore upon his locks so bright;
Arrayed, too, was this god, as watch he kept,
As formerly he was, when Argus[2] slept.
And thus he spake: "To Athens shalt thou wend
Thy way, and there all thy great woe shall end."

---

[1] Love.

[2] This alludes to Argus of the hundred eyes, whom Mercury charmed to sleep and slew.

And at these words, Arcite woke with a start:
"Now truly, though I once with pain did smart,"
Quoth he, "to go to Athens will I dare,
And will from dread of death no trouble spare
To see my lady, whom I love and try
To serve; with her I care not if I die."
And as he spake, he took a great mirrór,
And saw how sadly changed was his colóur,
And how his face looked of another kind.
And right anon it came into his mind,
That since his face was so much disfigúred
By all the maladies he had endured,
He might, if clothes of low estate he wore,
In Athens live unknown for evermore,
And see his lady well-nigh day by day;
And right anon he changed all his array,
And clad himself as a poor labourer.
And with a squire alone, and none other,
Who knew full well how all had come to pass,
And was in dress disguiséd as he was,
To Athens he set out the nearest way.
And to the court he cometh on a day,
And offereth at the gate his services
To drag or draw, as he directed is.
And here anon, to put it short and plain,
He in the office of the chamberlain
Was placed, who dwelling was with Emily.
For he was wise, and very soon could he
Look after all the servants that were there.
And well he could hew wood or water bear,
For he was young and mighty, and not slim,
But rather was he strong, and big of limb.



In what he had to do nought went amiss.
A year or two he spent in this servíce,
Page of the court of Emily the fair,
And Philostrate,[1] his name it was, while there.
But half so well beloved a man as he,
Was never seen at court of his degree.
So gentle a nature had he alway shown,
That throughout all the court he had renown.
They said that it would be a charity,
If Theseüs him raised in his degree,
And gave him honourable work to do,
So that he might the more his virtues show.
And thus, both for good deeds and tongue, his name,
Within a while, well known to all became,
And Theseüs did him so much admire,
That of his chamber he made him a squire,
And gave him gold to maintain his degree;
And eke men brought him out of his countrý,
From year to year full secretly his rent;
But honestly and wisely he it spent,
And thus it was none were astonishéd.
And three years in this wise his life he led,
And bore him so in peace and eke in war,
There was no man whom Theseüs loved more.
And in this bliss I now will Arcite quit,
And speak I will of Palamon a bit.

[1] In the *Theseida* Arcite takes the name of Pentheo. The name of Philostrate might have been suggested to Chaucer either by Boccaccio's poem entitled *Philostrato*, or by the *Decameron*, in which one of the characters is so called. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, of which the principal subject is plainly taken from this tale, a Philostrate is also introduced, as a favourite servant of Theseus, master of his sports.—*Tyrwhitt.*

In dreadful darkness in a strong prisón
Had been for seven long years this Palamon,
Tormented both with woe and with distress.
Who hath more sorrow felt and heaviness
Than Palamon, whom love had treated so,
That mad he seemed, out of his wits, with woe?
And eke, alas! a prisoner he were
For ever, and not only for a year.
And who could rhyme in English properly
His martyrdom? Forsooth it is not I,
Who pass it o'er as lightly as I may.
It fell that in the seventh year, in May,
On the third night, (as olden books relate,
Which all this story much more plainly state,)
Were it by chance or by some destiny,
(As, when a thing is fated, it shall be),
That somewhat after midnight, Palamon
By friendly aid broke out of his prisón,
And fled the town as fast as he could go,
For he had given unto his gaoler so
Much of a mixture, made of certain wine
With narcotics from Thebes and opiates fine,
That all the night through, though men might him shake,
He still would sleep, and never would awake.
And thus he fled as fast as e'er he might;
The day was near at hand and short the night,
And of necessity he soon must hide;
And to a grove there was hard by beside
The road, with cautious step stole Palamon.
For shortly this was his opinion,
That in that grove he might lie hid all day,
And in the night to Thebes start on his way,

Where he to urge his friends was anxious,
To help him to make war on Theseüs;
And shortly, would he either lose his life,
Or win his Emily[1] to be his wife.
This was his scheme and his intention plain.
Now will I turn unto Arcite again,
Who of the cares in store was ne'er aware,
Till fortune had him taken in the snare.
The busy lark, the messenger of day,
Had greeted with her song the morning gray;
And fiery Phœbus risen had so bright,
That all the East was laughing at the sight.
And with his beams had dried up in the greves[2]
The silver drops that hung upon the leaves.
And this Arcite, who had, as I have said,
Chief of the squires of Theseüs been made,
Arose and saw it was a merry day.
And that he might all honour do to May,
As he remembered well was his desire,
He on his courser, starting like a fire,
Rode to the fields where he might breathe fresh air,
From out the court a mile or two it were.
And to the grove, of which to you I spake,
By purest chance began his way to take,
That he might make a garland, to be worn
Around his neck, of woodbine or hawthorn.
And loud he sang, as shone the sun full sheen,
"O May, with all thy flowerets and thy green,

[1] Palamon seems here to have forgotten all about the possibility of his former companion Arcite having married Emily during the six or seven years that he (Palamon) had been a solitary prisoner.

[2] Groves.

Right welcome be thou, bright and fairest May,
I hope that I may get some green to-day."
And from his horse he leapt with joyful heart,
And to the grove full hastily did start.
And on a path he roaméd up and down,
Near where by accident this Palamon
Lay in a bush, that no man might him see,
For sore afraid he would be killed was he.
But little knew he that it was Arcite,
God knows he would have scarce believed his sight.
But there's a saying known for many years,
That fields full oft have eyes, and woods have ears.
Men are most wise, who live most equably,
For men may meet quite unexpectedly.
Full little knew Arcite that his comráde
Was nigh at hand, to hear all that he said,
For in the bush he did remain quite still.
When Arcite had of roaming had his fill,
And songs had sung both loud and lustily,
He fell into a study suddenly,
As oft do lovers, in queer ways adepts,
Now in high spirits, now down in the depths;
Now up, now down, as buckets in a well.
Just as a Friday, truthfully to tell,
Now shineth bright and but now raineth fast,
So can the fickle Venus overcast
The hearts of all her people; as her day
Is changeable, she changeth her array.
Seldom is Friday every week the same.
And when Arcite had sung, a great sigh came,
And without more, down sat he all forlorn:
"Alas!" quoth he, "the day that I was born;

How long, O Juno, in thy cruelty,
Wilt thou make war 'gainst Thebes the sad city?
Alas! is now brought to confusion
The house of Cadmus and of Amphión;
Of Cadmus great and noble, and the man
Who first built Thebes, or first the town began,
And of that city first was crownéd king,
Of his lineage am I, and his offspríng,
Sprung from the royal stock, in line direct:
And now I am a mere slave in effect,
And one who serves as squire contemptibly
The man who is his mortal enemy.
And Juno, yet, hath put me more to shame,
For I dare not be known by my own name.
And I who once was wont to be Arcite,
Am now called Philostrate, not worth a mite.
Alas! thou cruel Mars! Alas! Juno,
Our kindred hast thou all destroyéd so,
That none remain save I, and Palamon,
Whom Theseüs tormenteth in prisón.
And on all this, to slay me utterly,
Love hath with fiery dart so wickedly
Pierced through my heart, it may with truth be said,
My death hath come ere that my shirt is made.[1]

[1] Tyrwhitt compares T. iii., 734:

"O fatal sustren, which, or any clothe
Me shapen was, my destiny ne sponne."

And *Legend of Goode Women*, 2618:

"Sens first that day that shapen was my sherte,
Or by the fatal sister had my dome."

Thou with thine eyes hast slain me, Emily,
And art the cause, whereof I now must die.
On all my woes and every other care,
I would not set the value of a tare,
If but to please you, I could get the chance."
  And as he spake, down fell he in a trance,
And long he lay; and up forthwith did start
This Palamon, who thought, that through his heart
He felt a cold sword suddenly to glide.
With ire he shook, and could no longer hide,
But up from out the bushes quick did start,
And said, "Arcite, false traitor that thou art,
Now art thou caught, who lov'st my lady so,
(For whom I have had all this pain and woe,)
And art my blood, and who to help me swore,
(As I full oft have told thee heretofore),
And hast here now befooled Duke Theseüs,
And falsely changed thy name in acting thus,
I will be dead, or else certes thou shalt die.
Thou shalt not love my lady Emily.
But I will love her, and I tell you so,
For I am Palamon, thy mortal foe.
And though I have no weapon here with me,
Since out of prison I've escapéd free,
I do not doubt that either thou shalt die,
Or thou shalt cease to love my Emily.
Choose which thou wilt, for thou shalt not go free."
  Arcite, with mien full terrible to see,
When that he knew him, and had heard his word,
Fierce as a lion, quick pulled out his sword,
And thus he spake: "By God, who is above,
If it were not that thou art mad for love,

And eke hast got no weapon in this place,
Thou ne'er should'st move from here one single pace,
But by my hand and in this grove should'st die.
Thy compact and thy bond I here defy,
Which thou pretendest that I made with thee.
What? Fool, well understand that love is free!
Her will I love in spite of all thy might.
But since thou art a brave and worthy knight,
And wishest this by battle to decide,
To-morrow, by my troth, I will here ride
Without the knowledge of a single wight,
And here I will be found as a true knight,
And I will bring of arms enough for thee;
And choose the best, and leave the worst for me.
And meat and drink as well this night I'll bring
Enough for thee, and clothes for thy bedding.
And if so be that you my lady win,
And slay me in this wood that I am in,
Thou mayst have thy lady willingly."
This Palamon answered: "I grant it thee."
And thus they parted till the morrow morn,
When each had fully pledged his faith and sworn.
O Cupid, who hast little charity!
O king, who wilt none other have with thee!
Truly 'tis said that love will have his way,
And to restraint will ne'er have ought to say.
And so found out Arcite and Palamon.
Arcite unto the town rode off anon,
And on the morrow, ere the sun arose,
He secretly two sets of armour chose,
Both suitable and meet, with which to do
Battle, as was arranged betwixt the two.

And on his horse, as all alone he rode,
He carried of the arms the double load.
And in the grove, at the set time and place,
Arcite and Palamon met face to face.
Then came and went the colour in each face,
As doth the hunter's in the land of Thrace,
Who, standing at the gap, armed with a spear,
When hunted is the lion or the bear,
And hearing it come rushing through the wood,
And breaking boughs with noise that bodes no good,
Thinketh, "Here comes my mortal enemy;
Without a doubt, it must be slain or I;
For either I must slay it at the gap,
Or be myself slain if aught me mishap."
So would they fare, as far as either knew,
And of each face thus quickly changed the hue.
No "Good-day" was there, nor saluted they,
But straight, without a word or e'en delay,
Each of them helped forthwith to arm the other,
The same as though he were his own dear brother;
And when arrayed, with spears both sharp and strong,
They passes at each other made full long.
Thou mightest well have thought that Palamon
Was in his fighting like a mad lión,
And as a cruel tiger was Arcite;
As savage boars, too, they began to smite,
And like them, foaming white with rage, they stood,
And ankle deep they fought there in their blood.
And thus I now will leave them fighting well,
As I have more of Theseüs to tell.
The destiny, that faithful minister,
That executeth in this world ever

The plans that God doth first Himself prepare,
Is oft so strong, that though the world would swear
The contrary, as being in a word
More probable, sometimes things have occurred,
And ne'er again within a thousand years.
For certainly our appetites and fears,
Be they for war, or peace, for hate, or love,
Are ever ruled by Providence above.
I now allude to mighty Theseüs,
Who to go hunting was so anxious,
And specially to kill the hart in May,
That in his bed he scarce could wait for day,
Ere he was clad, and ready was to ride
With huntsmen and his horn and hounds beside
Him; for in hunting he took such a pleasure,
That it to him was his great joy, at leisure,
To hunt and kill the hart, as I've observed,
For, after Mars, he great Diana served.
Clear was the day, as I have said ere this,
And Theseüs all filled with joy and bliss,
With his Hippolyta, the lovely queen,
And Emily, who clothéd was in green,
Out hunting rode away right royally.
And to the wooded grove that stood hard by,
In which there was a hart, as men did say,
Duke Theseüs then quickly made his way.
And to a bushy plain he rode anon,
For thither was the swift hart wont to run,
And o'er a brook, and so forth on his way.
This duke thus hoped to have a course that day
With hounds that were the best he could obtain.
And when the duke was come unto the plain,

Beneath the sun's glare as he looked anon,
Amazed, he saw Arcite and Palamon,
Who fiercely fought, like two wild boars enraged,
Their bright swords flashing, as the two engaged,
So hideously, that e'en the lightest stroke
Seemed to be strong enough to fell an oak.
And who they were this duke took little note,
But quickly with his spurs his courser smote,
And with a bound he was betwixt the two,
And pulling out his sword he shouted "Hoo!"[1]
"No more, for him, who would not lose his head.
By mighty Mars, that man will soon be dead,
Who smiteth any stroke that I may see!
But tell me now what sort of men ye be,
Who have to fight, so boldly come out here,
Without a judge or other officer,
As if 'twere in the lists full royally."
This Palamon him answered hastily,
And said: "O sire, what need is there that I
Should speak? We both have well deserved to die.
We woeful wretches are, and both captives,
Who wearied are of our unhappy lives;
And, as thou art an upright lord and judge,
Now give us neither mercy nor refuge.
And slay me first, for holy charity;
But slay my comrade eke as well as me.
Or slay him first; for though thou dost not know
The fact: this is Arcite, thy mortal foe,
Who from thy land was banished under pain
Of death, and thus deserveth to be slain.

[1] An exclamation made by heralds to stop the fight.—*Morris.*

For he it is who came unto thy gate,
And said that he was calléd Philostrate.
Thus hath he thee befooled beyond belief
For years, and thou hast made him squire-in-chief.
And he it is who loveth Emily.
For since the day hath come that I must die,
I freely make my full confession,
That I myself am woeful Palamon,
Who hath escaped from prison wickedly.
I am thy mortal foe, and it is I,
Who love so hotly Emily the bright,
That I would die if only in her sight.
Therefore I ask for sentence and for death,
But slay us both: I ask it in one breath,
For we have both deserved well to be slain."
This worthy duke answered anon again,
And said: "This is the short conclusion:
By your own mouth, and your confession,
You stand condemned, and I will it record;
There is no need to bind you with a cord.
But ye shall die, by mighty Mars the red!"
The queen, whose gentle woman's heart sore bled,
Began to weep, and so did Emily,
And all the ladies of the company.
'Twas a great pity, so it seemed to all,
That such a dread misfortune should befall
These noble men, who were of great estate,
That they for love should have so sad a fate.
And when they saw the wounds so wide and sore,
They all of them cried out, some less, some more,
"Have mercy, Lord, upon us women all!"
And on their knees all bare, down did they fall,

And would have kissed his feet there as he stood,
Until at length more softened was his mood;
(For pity's felt soon in a gentle heart), TRUE!
And though he first with ire did shake and start,
He reconsidered shortly in a clause
The wickedness of both, and eke the cause;
And though in anger he them still accused,
Yet in his heart he really both excused;
For thus it seemed to him, that every man
Will help himself in love, whene'er he can,
And strive will to escape from his prisón;
And in his heart he felt compassion
For all the women, weeping every one;
And in his noble heart he thought anon,
And gently to himself then said he: "Fy,
Upon a lord who will have no mercy,
But will a lion prove in word and deed
To them who would repent and are in dread,
The same as to a proud and angry man,
Who will still hold to what he first began!
That lord has little of discretion,
Who 'twixt the two makes no division,
But treats the pride and humbleness the same."
And shortly when less angry he became,
He cheerfully looked up, and turning towards
The two, he spake aloud all these same words:
"The god of love, ah! *benedicite*,
How mighty and how great a lord is he!
Against him nought availeth obstacles,
He may be called a god of miracles;
For he can fashion at his own free will
All hearts, and or with joy or grief them fill.

Lo! here this Arcite and this Palamon,
Who were in freedom out of my prisón,
And might have lived in Thebes right royally,
Who know I am their mortal enemy,
And know, too, that death in my power here lies,
And yet hath love, in spite of their two eyes,
Unwisely brought them hither, both to die.
Now look ye, is not that a great folly?
Who may not be a fool, if but he love?
Behold for God's sake, who sits up above;
See how they bleed! Are they not well arrayed?
Thus hath their lord, the god of love, them paid
Their wages and their fees for their servíce.
And yet they think still, that they are full wise,
Who worship love, for aught that may befall.
But this to me the best game is of all,
That she, for whom they live so merrily,
Can thank them for their love no more than I.
She knew as much of all this fine affair,
By God, as doth a cuckoo or a hare.
But all things must be tried both hot and cold;
A man must be a fool when young or old;
I knew it well myself full long ago,
For in my time I, too, have acted so.
And therefore since I've felt the pains of love,
And know full well how sore they oft may prove,
As one who hath been taken in his snare,
I will forgive you wholly this affair,
As doth request the queen who kneeleth here,
And also Emily, my sister dear.
And ye shall both anon unto me swear,
That ye to harm my crown will never dare,

Nor make war on me either night or day,
But be as friendly with me as ye may.
I will forgive your trespass every whit."
And they swore all he asked, so just was it,
And for protection and for mercy prayed,
And he them granted grace, and thus he said:
"Respecting lineage and wealthiness,
Although she were a queen or a princess,
Each of you both would doubtless worthy be
To wed her when the time might come; you see
I speak here of my sister Emily,
For whom ye've had this strife and jealousy.
Ye know yourselves she cannot wed the two
At once, and that e'en fight ye ever so:
And be he pleased or not, 'tis my belief,
One must go piping in an ivy leaf;[1]
That is to say, she may not have you both,
Though ye be e'er so jealous or so wroth.
And therefore will I make it clear to thee,
That each may have in full his destiny,
As is ordained, now hearken what I state;
Lo, thus it shall be, as I here relate.
My will is this, and understand that I
This question would conclude without reply,
(And, if you're pleased, then make the best of it,)
That each shall go where'er he thinketh fit,
And without ransom or restraint full sore;
And this day fifty weeks, nor less, nor more,
Each of you here a hundred knights shall bring,
Armed for the lists, complete in everything,

[1] Console himself as best he may.

And ready each their foes here to assail.
And this I promise, and I will not fail
Upon my troth, and as I am a knight,
That to the one of you who in the fight
Shall strongest prove, and, while you both shall strive,
Shall, with his hundred, his opponent drive
Out of the lists, or else shall take his life,
Then will I give my Emily for wife
To him whom fortune grants so fair a grace.
The lists I will erect here in this place,
And God so truly mercy have on me
As I 'twixt you shall judge impartially.
Ye shall no other bargain with me make,
One must the other kill or prisoner take.
And if it seems to you this is well said,
Now tell me, if ye will be thus repaid.
This must the end be and conclusion."
Who looketh happy now as Palamon?
Who springeth up for joy as doth Arcite?
Who could describe or who could well indite
The fulness of the joy felt in that place,
When Theseüs conferred so fair a grace?
Upon their knees down went they all of them,
And from their hearts and souls they thankéd him.
And specially the Thebans oft him praised.
And thus with merry hearts and hopes upraised
They took their leave, and started off to ride
Homeward to Thebes, with its walls old and wide.
I fancy men would deem me negligent,
If I forgot to tell how much was spent
By Theseüs, who forthwith busily
Commenced erecting lists right royally.

I dare to say that in this world ne'er has
Been seen a nobler theatre than this was.
'Twas in circumference a mile about,
And walled with stone, and had a trench without;
Round was the shape, like as a compass is,
With steps in height some sixty foot paces,
And when a man sat down, so were they made,
He hindered naught the sight of his comráde.
Eastward there stood a gate of marble white,
And westward such another opposite;
And shortly, in conclusion, such a place
Was never seen on earth in such a space.
For in the land there was no craftsman, who
Arithmetic or geometry knew,
Nor painter was there, nor carver of images,
But Theseüs him hired, and gave to him wages,
That each might help with plan or with device.
And as a place for rites and sacrifice,
O'er th' eastward gate, upon the wall above,
In honour of Venus, goddess of love,
He had an altar and a chapel made;
And westward, he to warlike Mars had paid
Due honour, and had there another made,
That truly cost of gold full much, 'tis said.
And northward, in a turret on the wall,
Of alabaster white, and red corál,
An oratory beautiful to see,
In honour of Diana's chastity,
Was built by Theseüs befittingly.
But still I quite forgot to specify
The noble carving, and the portraitures,
The shape, the countenance of the figúres,

That were in all these oratories three.
And first in that of Venus you might see
Depicted on the wall, sad to behold,
The broken sleeps, and eke the sighs all cold,
The sacred tears and lamentations,
The ardent struggles of affections,
Which in this life love's servants had endured;
The oaths, too, which their covenants assured.
Pleasure and hope, desire, foolhardiness,
Beauty and youth as well, and wealthiness,
The charms, the strength, the lies, and flattery,
Suspense, anxiety, and jealousy,
Who wore of yellow goldes[1] a bright garland,
And had a cuckoo sitting on her hand;
Feasts, instruments, and carols, and the dance,
Pleasure, and dress, and all the circumstance
Of love, which I have mentioned here or shall
Hereafter, were all painted on the wall.
And more than I could ever mention.
For truly all the mount of Citheron,[2]
Where[3] Venus hath her principal dwelling,
Was represented in the wall painting,
And all the garden with its prettiness.
Nor was left out the porter Idleness,[4]

[1] Morris calls this flower a "turnsol," and adds that the corn-marigold in the North is called *goulans*, *guilde*, or *goles*, and in the South, *golds*.

[2] Cithaeron, sacred to Venus.

[3] This description of the temple of Venus is chiefly taken from Boccaccio. (See Tyrwhitt.)

[4] In the *Romaunt of the Rose*, "Idleness" is the porter of the garden in which the Rose ("Beauty") is kept.—*Morris*.

Nor Narcissus the fair of years long gone,
Nor yet the folly of King Salomon,
Nor eke the enormous strength of Hercules,
The charms, too, of Medea and of Circes,
Nor Turnus with the hardy, fierce courage,
Nor yet rich Crœsus held in close bondage.
Thus may ye see, wisdom nor wealthiness,
Beauty nor cunning, strength nor fearlessness,
With Venus can in power associate,
For she at will the world can regulate.
Lo, all these folk caught had been in her net,
Till they for woe had said: "How sad is it!"
Suffice it to describe some three or four,
And though I could recount a thousand more.
The statue of fair Venus, grand to see,
Was naked and was floating on the sea,
And from the bosom down all covered was
With waves full green and bright as any glass.
A dulcimer in her right hand had she,
And on her head, right beautiful to see,
A garland of fresh roses sweet smelling;
Above her head her doves were fluttering.
Before her stood her young son Cupid, who
Upon his shoulders of fair wings had two;
And blind he was, as is full often seen;
A bow he bore and arrows bright and keen.
Why should I not as well here tell you all
The painting, that there was upon the wall
Within the house of mighty Mars the red?
In length and breadth the wall was furnished,
As are the inner parts of that grim place
Known as the mighty temple of Mars in Thrace,

In which same cold and frosty region,
The great Mars hath his sovereign mansion.
First on the walls was painted a forest,
In which there dwelt no man nor any beast,
With knotted, twisted trees, barren and old,
With stumps all sharp and hideous to behold;
And where was heard a moaning, sighing sound,
As though a storm was dashing to the ground
Great boughs; and, where the land was downward bent,
The temple stood of Mars armipotent,
Built all of burnished steel, of which th' entry,
Narrow, and long, and ghastly was to see;
Through which winds blew with such rapidity,
They shook the massive gates tremendously.
The northern light[1] in at the portal shone,
For in the walls, of windows were there none,
Through which the light might have been made to slant.
The doors were all of hardest adamant,
Fastened across and all the length along
With iron tough; again, to make it strong,
Each pillar of this temple was, I ween,
Round as a tun, of iron bright and sheen.
There saw I first the dark imagining
Of felony, and all the compassing;

[1] "I suppose the 'northern light' is the Aurora Borealis; but this phenomenon is so rarely mentioned by mediæval writers, that it may be questioned whether Chaucer meant anything more than the faint and cold illumination received by reflexion through the door of an apartment facing the north."—*Marsh.*

The cruel ire, as burning coal, all red;
The pickpocket, and eke the pallid dread;
The smiler with a knife under his cloak;
The stable burning with a thick black smoke;
The treachery of murder in the bed;
The open warfare with the wounds that bled;
Contests with bloody knives, and sharp menáce;
All full of noises was that horrid place.
The slayer of himself I too saw there,
Whose very heart's blood bathéd all his hair;
The nail fast driven through the head at night;
The clammy death, with mouth that gaped upright;
And in the midst of all there sat mischance,
With discomfort and sorry countenance;
And saw I madness, laughing in his rage;
Armed discontent, outcry, and fierce outrage;
The corpses in the bush, with throats that bled;
A thousand slain and not with sickness dead;
The tyrant, with his prey of all bereft;
The town destroyed, in which was nothing left.
And still I saw all burnt the ships of war;
The hunter slain, too, by the savage boar;
The sow eating her young right in the cradle;
The cook burnt notwithstanding his long ladle.
Naught was forgotten on dread Mars' part;
The carter ridden over by his cart,
Beneath the wheel full low was lying down.
There was also of Mars' division,
The barber, butcher, and the blacksmith, who
On anvil swords doth forge and sharpen too.
And painted all above, within a tower,
I conquest saw, who sat in great honóur,

And eke the sword full sharp, which o'er his head [1]
Was hanging by a cunning twisted thread;
The slaughter of Nero and Julius
Depicted were, and of Antonius;
And whether at the time they were unborn,
Yet were their deaths all shown, sad and forlorn;
By will of Mars, by figure or by sign,
It was depicted in those paintings fine,
(As is predicted by the stars above),
Who should be slain or who should die for love.

* * * * *

The statue Mars stood on a chariot,
Full armed, and grim looked, as I know not what,
And o'er his head two brilliant figures shone,
Of stars, which were in ancient writings known,
One as Puella, the other Rubeus.[2]
This god of arms was represented thus:—
A wolf there stood before him at his feet,
With eyes all red, and it a man did eat.
With cunning hand well painted was this story,
Out of respect to Mars and to his glory.
And to the temple of Diana chaste,
As briefly as I can, I now will haste
To give you here the true description.
Depicted on the walls all up and down,

[1] An allusion to the well-known story of Damocles at the court of Dionysius of Corinth.

[2] The names of two figures in geomancy, representing two constellations in heaven. Puella signifies Mars retrograde, and Rubeus, Mars direct.—*Tyrwhitt*, GL.

Were scenes of hunting and of chastity.
There saw I how woeful Calistopé[1]
(When with her was Diana grieved, I fear,)
Was from a woman turned into a bear,
And afterwards the Pole-star she became;
Thus was it painted, and I tell the same.
Her son is eke a star, as men may see.
There did I see Dane[2] turned into a tree,
I do not mean the good goddess Dyane,[3]
But Peneus' own daughter, calléd Dane.
Actæon, who into a stag was turned,
For seeing Dyane naked, as you've learned,
I also saw, and how the hounds him caught,
And ate him up because they knew him naught.
And saw I, as was painted furthermore,
How Athalaunte[4] did hunt the savage boar,
And Meleagre, and many more also,
On whom this Dyane brought distress and woe.
There many another wondrous thing saw I,
Which I would not recall to memory.
This goddess high aloft sat on the fleet
Hart's back, with little hounds around her feet,
And underneath her feet she had a moon,
Which growing was and would be waning soon.
In green her statue clothed was to the face,
With bow in hand and arrows in a case;
Her eyes all modestly she kept cast down
Towards where grim Pluto hath his region.

[1] Callisto, a daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia, and one of Diana's attendants.
[2] Daphne, who was beloved by Apollo, and turned into a laurel.
[3] Diana. [4] Atalanta.

A woman lay in front, with travail torn,
But, as her child so long remained unborn,
Full sadly on Lucina did she call,
And say: "O help me, who canst best of all."
Well could he lifelike paint, who had that wrought,
With many a florin he the colours bought.
Now were the lists prepared, and Theseüs,
Who at immense cost had erected thus
The temples, and the theatre too as well,
When all was done, he liked it wondrous well.
And now I will leave Theseüs alone,
And speak of Arcite and of Palamon.
The day of their return at length drew nigh,
When each should bring a hundred knights to try
Issue in battle, as I you have told;
And that they to their covenants might hold,
To Athens each a hundred knights did bring,
Armed for the fight complete in everything.
And in good truth believed full many a man,
That ne'er was seen, since first the world began,
(And here I speak of knighthood's honoured band,
Wherever God hath made or sea or land),
Among so few, so noble a company.
For all the men who well loved chivalry,
And anxious were to have illustrious names,
Had prayed hard that they might join in the games;
And happy had he felt, who chosen was.
For if this same to-morrow came to pass,
Ye know full well that every merry knight,
Who loveth true, and is renowned for might,
Were it in England, or were it elsewhere,
Would, and most heartily, wish to be there.

Fight for a lady? Benedicite!
It were a truly pleasant sight to see.
And thus fared they who were with Palamon.
With him of knights there came full many a one,
And some arrayed were in habergeon,[1]
In breast-plate bright, and with a light gipon;[2]
And some, too, had a pair of plates full large,
While others had a Prussian shield or targe;
And some there were armed on their legs as well,
And had an axe, and some a mace of steel.
There was no guise, that was not known of old,
But armed were they, as I have here you told,
And each after his own opinion.
There mightest thou have seen with Palamon,
Ligurge himself, the noble king of Thrace;
Black was his beard, and manly was his face.
The circles of his eyes set in his head
Shone of a colour 'twixt yellow and red,
And like a griffin grim he stared about;
Unkempt his locks lay o'er his brows, and stout
Were built his limbs, with muscles hard and strong,
His shoulders broad, and arms full round and long;
And as the fashion was in his country,
Full high upon a car of gold stood he,
And in the traces were of white bulls four.
No coat-of-arms[3] wore he on his armóur,
But he a bear's skin had, coal black, and old,
With yellow nails as bright as any gold.

[1] Hauberk. [2] A short cassock.
[3] A coat worn over the armour upon which the armorial ensigns of the wearer were usually embroidered.—*Morris*, GL.

His long hair was all combed behind his back,
And as a raven's feather was it black.
A wreath of gold full broad, of mighty weight,
Upon his head he had, set full of great
Bright stones, of rubies and of diamonds;
Around his car there ran some white boarhounds,
Twenty or more, as large as any steer,
And used to hunt the lion or the deer.
They followed him with muzzles tightly bound,
And had gold collars made with rings cut round.
A hundred lords attended him about,
All armed right well, with hearts full stern and stout.
And with Arcite, as men in stories find,
The great Emetrius, the king of Inde,[1]
On a bay steed, with trappings all of steel,
Arrayed in cloth of gold diapered well,
Came riding like the god of war, great Mars.
His coat-of-arms was made of cloth of Tars,[2]
And trimmed with pearls, all round, and great, and white;
His saddle was of beaten gold and bright;
A mantle from his shoulders was hanging,
Brimful of rubies red and glittering.
His crisp curled locks they hung in ringlets down,
And yellow were, and glistened in the sun.
His nose turned up, his eyes of citron hue,
His lips were round, his visage red, 'tis true;
Some freckles were there which his face o'erlaid,
Betwixt a yellow and a black in shade.
He like a lion looked, I must confess;
His age was five-and-twenty years, I guess.

[1] India. [2] Supposed to be a kind of silk.

His beard it had begun full well to spring,
His voice was like a trumpet thundering.
Upon his head he wore, of laurel green,
A garland fresh, and bright as can be seen.
Upon his hand he bore, with great delight,
An eagle tame, and, as a lily, white.
A hundred great lords had he with him there,
And fully armed, except their heads, they were,
And richly too, and in all kinds of things.
For trust ye well, that dukes, and earls, and kings,
Were gathered in this noble company,
For love and benefit of chivalry.
And with this king on either side there came
Full many a great lion and leopard tame.
And in this wise these lords did, one and all,
Upon a Sunday, as it did befall,
Arrive at dawn, and in the town alight.
This Theseüs, this duke, this worthy knight,
When he had brought them into his city,
And lodged each, as befitted his degree,
He feasted them, and took so much labóur
To entertain, and do them all honóur,
That certainly all men must here admit,
No one who lived could have improved on it.
The minstrelsy, the service at the feast,
The gifts he gave the greatest and the least,
The rich array seen in the duke's palace,
And who the first or last sat on the dais,
What ladies fairest were, or at dancíng
The best, or which of them could dance and sing,
And which most feelingly could speak of love;
What fine hawks sat upon the perch above,

What hounds upon the floor were lying down;
Of all this I will make no mention:
For thus it seems to me the proper plan;
Now comes the point, and hearken if ye can.
The Sunday night ere day began to break,
When Palamon heard, as he lay awake,
The lark's sweet note, (for though from dawn some two
Hours 'twas, yet sang the lark and he also,)
With pious heart, and eke with high courage,
He rose to start thence on his pilgrimage,
Unto the blissful Citherea, who
(I speak of Venus) is so kind and true.
And in her hour forth did he quickly haste
Unto the lists, where was her temple placed,
And down he knelt, and with but little cheer,
And heart full sore, he spake as ye shall hear.
"Fairest of fair, O lady mine, Venus,
Daughter of Jove, and spouse of Vulcanus,
Who makest glad the mount of Citheron,
For that love which thou feltest for Adon,[1]
Have pity on my bitter tears that smart,
And take my humble prayers into thine heart.
Alas! indeed I know not how to tell
The torments that I suffer in my hell;
My heart may not my sufferings betray,
I am confused, and thus can nothing say.
But mercy, lady bright, who knowest well
My thoughts and woes that ever with me dwell,
Consider this, and pity grief so sore,
As surely as I will for evermore,

[1] Adonis.

As far as in me lies, thy servant be,
And will make war alway with chastity.
To one who makes this vow, give help. Thou know'st,
I care not of success in arms to boast,
Nor ask to-morrow to have victory,
Nor e'en renown, nor yet the vain glory
Of praise for deeds of arms blown up and down;
But I would fully have possession
Of Emily, and die in her service;
Find thou the manner how, and in what wise.
I care not whether it may better be,
That I should conquer them or they should me,
So that I have my lady in my arms.
For though it be that Mars is god of arms,
Your virtue is so great in heaven above,
That, if you wish it, I shall have my love.
Thee will I worship, come what may betide,
And on thine altar, must I walk or ride,
I will do sacrifice, and fires will heat;
And if thou wilt not so, my lady sweet,
Then pray I, that to-morrow with a spear
Arcite may thrust me through the heart, I swear.
Little reck I, when I have lost my life,
If Arcite win my lady for his wife.
This is the aim and purpose of my prayer,
Give me my love, O blissful lady dear."
And when the orison of Palamon
Was finished quite, his sacrifice anon,
Full piteously, with solemn rites he made,
Though I say naught of the respect he paid.
At length the statue of fair Venus shook,
And made a sign, and that same sign he took

As proof his prayer accepted was that day.
For though the sign had shown some short delay,
Yet knew he well that granted was his boon;
And with glad heart he started home full soon.
The third unequal hour[1] since Palamon
Had to the temple of fair Venus gone,
Up rose the sun, and up rose Emily,
And to the temple of Diana she
Forth went. Her maidens, whom she thither led,
Full prudently the fire had furnishéd,
And incense, and the clothes, and everything
With which to sacrifice, did with them bring;
The horns, too, full of mead, and in such wise,
There lackéd naught with which to sacrifice.
Full bright the apparel and perfumed the air;
This Emily, with spirit debonnaire,
Her body washed with water from a well;
But how she did her rites I dare not tell,
Except it be in words quite general;
And yet you'd be amused to hear it all;
And he who meaneth well no harm would do:
But yet perhaps 'tis best to leave it so.
Her brilliant locks were combed, though all hung down,
And of a cerial[2] green oak a crown

[1] In the astrological system, the day, from sunrise to sunset, and the night, from sunset to sunrise, being each divided into twelve hours, it is plain that the hours of the day and night were never equal except just at the equinoxes. The hours attributed to the planets were of this unequal sort. See *Kalendrier de Berg. loc. cit.*, and our author's *Treatise on the Astrolabe.*—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Belonging to the species of oak called "Cerrus."

Full fair and seemly, on her head was laid.
Upon the altar there two fires she made,
And did such things, as have been fully told
By Statius of Thebes,[1] and books of old.
And when the fire arose, with piteous cheer,
She to Diana spake, as ye may hear.
"O thou chaste goddess of the woodland green,
By whom the earth, and heaven, and seas are seen,
O queen of Pluto's kingdom, dark, and low,
Goddess of maidens, who my heart dost know,
And many a year hast known what I desire,
Preserve me from thy vengeance and thine ire,
Which Atheon endured so cruelly.
O chaste goddess, well dost thou know that I
Desire to be a maiden all my life,
And never to be loved or be a wife.
I am, as thou dost know, like thee, through grace,
A maid, who loveth hunting and the chase,
And well am pleased to walk in woodlands wild,
And would not be a wife, nor have a child.
Naught do I ever wish to know of man,
So help me, lady, if ye may or can,
As surely as thou hast three forms[2] in thee.
For Palamon, who hath such love for me,
And eke Arcite, who loveth me so sore,
This grace I beg, without a moment more;
So send thou love and peace betwixt the two,
And from me let their hearts be turnéd so,
That all their ardent love and their desire,
And all their grievous torments and their fire,

[1] In the *Thebaid* of Statius.
[2] Diana was also called Luna, and sometimes Hecate.

May now be quenched or turned another way.
And if thou wilt not grant me what I pray,
Or if my destiny be shapéd so,
That I shall have to take one of the two,
So send me him who most desireth me.
Behold, thou goddess of pure chastity,
The bitter tears that on my cheeks now fall.
Since thou art maid, and watchest o'er us all,
Watch o'er my maidenhood, and it preserve,
And while I live a maid, I will thee serve."
The fires were burning on the altar clear,
While Emily was thus engaged in prayer;
But suddenly she saw a sight, and blenched,
For right anon one of the fires was quenched,
And quick rekindled, after which anon,
The other fire was quenched, and all was gone;
And, as it died, it made a strange whistlíng,
As doth a brand, when wet, in its burníng.
And from the brand's end there ran out anon,
What looked like bloody drops, full many a one.
At which so sore aghast was Emily,
Nigh mad she seemed, and quick began to cry,
For she could not guess what it signified;
But from sheer fear so bitterly she cried
And wept, that it was sorrowful to hear.
And thereupon Diana did appear,
With bow in hand just like a bold huntress,
And said: "My daughter, cease thy sore distress.
Among the gods on high it is affirmed,
And by eternal word it is confirmed,
That thou shalt surely wed one of the two,
Who have for thee had so much grief and woe,

But which of them 'twill be, I may not tell.
Farewell, for here I may no longer dwell,
But from the fires which on my altar burn,
Ere that thou goest hence, thou mayest learn
The fate of thy love, as 'twill come to pass."
And as she spake, most wonderful it was,
The arrows in her quiver clattered quite:
And forth she went and vanished out of sight.
At which this Emily astonished was,
And cried out: "What denoteth this? Alas!
I leave myself to thy protection,
Diana, and thy disposition."—
And home she went anon the nearest way.
It ended thus, and there's nought left to say.

During the hour of Mars which followed next,
Forth slowly walked Arcite, with spirit vexed,
Unto the house of Mars to sacrifice,
With rites, as in his country would suffice.
With doleful heart and deep devotion,
He thus to Mars addressed his orison.

"O mighty god, who in the kingdom cold
Of Thrace art honoured, and, as we are told,
Esteemed the lord, and who in every land,
Of arms the bridle holdest in thine hand,
And givest good or bad luck at thy will,
Accept of me my sacrifice, and still
My heart; and if my youth may so deserve,
And if my might be worthy found to serve
Thy godhead, and I may be one of thine,
I pray thee pity me, who now doth pine.

* * * *

For I am young and ignorant as thou
Wast once, and am with love more hurt, I trow,
Than ever has been any sad creatúre.
For she, for whom I all this woe endure,
Nought careth whether I may float or sink.
Ere she will mercy show, full well I think,
I must with might here win her in this place;
And well I know, without some help and grace
From thee, but little will my might avail.
So help me, lord, to-morrow without fail,
Both for that fire which formerly burnt thee,
As well as for the fire which burneth me;
That I to-morrow may have victory.
Mine be the task, and thine the great glory.
Thy sovereign temple will I most honóur
Of any place, and alway will labóur
To do thy pleasure, and thy craft to grace.
I in thy temple will my banner place,
And eke the arms of all my company;
And evermore, until the day I die,
Eternal fire before thee will provide,
And by my promise ever will abide.
My beard, my hair, which now long hangeth down,
And never yet or hurt or harm hath known
From razor or from shears, I will thee give,
And will be thy true servant whilst I live.
Now, lord, have pity on my sorrows sore,
And give me victory, I ask no more."
As thus the prayer ceased of Arcite the strong,
The rings, which on the temple door were hung,
And eke the doors, all clattered noisily,
At which Arcite was frightened fearfully.

The fires upon the altar burnt so bright,
That all the temple round was bathed in lig
And from the ground a sweet smell rose anon,
And forthwith Arcite raised his hands, and on
The altar fire more incense quickly cast,
And other rites performed, until at last
The coat of mail of Mars began to ring,
And 'midst the sound he heard a murmuring,
Full low and dim, that said thus: "Victory!"
For which he praiséd Mars repeatedly.
And thus with joy and hope that he might fare
Full well, Arcite did to his inn repair,
As happy as a fowl is in the sun.
And such a quarrel was anon begun,
About this favour, in the heavens above,
Betwixt fair Venus, the goddess of love,
And Mars the stern, in arms omnipotent,
That Jupiter full busy was, intent
On stopping it, till Saturne pale and cold,
Who of adventures many had known of old,
Found from his old experience some art,
Whereby he soothed them both in every part.
'Tis truly said, age hath advantages,
For age hath wisdom and more prudent is.
Men may the old outrun, but not outwit.
Saturne, anon to stay their angry fit,
Began to try some remedy to find,
Although, in fact, it was not to his mind.
"My dearest daughter Venus," quoth Satúrne,
"My course, which hath to make so wide a turn,
Hath greater power than knoweth any man.
'Twas I who drowning in the sea began;

Mine is the prison in the darkened cell,
Mine is the strangling, and hanging as well,
The Murmures, and the rebels combating,
The groaning too, and secret poisoning;
I vengeance take, and give correction,
While I dwell in the sign of the Lión.
Mine is the ruin of the lofty halls,
The falling of the towers and of the walls
Upon the miner and the carpenter.
I Samson slew, when shaking the pillar;
From me too came all the diseases cold,
The direful treasons, and the plots of old;
I am the father of the pestilence.
Now weep no more, for I, with diligence,
Will so arrange that Palamon thy knight
Shall have his lady, as thou said'st he might.
Though Mars shall help his knight, yet ne'ertheless
Betwixt you there must peace be, more or less,
Although to judge from your complexion,
Thou art enraged, causing confusion.
Weep thou no more, for ready at thy will,
I, thy grandparent, will thy wish fulfil."
And now no more about the gods above,
Of Mars or Venus the goddess of love;
But will I tell, as fully as I can,
The chief event, for which I this began.
Great was the fête in Athens on that day,
And as it was the season, too, of May,
Each one of them seemed so on pleasure bent,
That, on the Monday, all their time they spent
Jousting and dancing, serving in such wise
Fair Venus; but as they would have to rise

Early the morrow morn to see the fight,
Unto their beds they went to rest at night.
Next morning, when the day didst first begin,
Of horse and harness such a clattering
And noise there was in every hostelry;
And to the palace rode a company
Of lords upon their steeds and their palfreys.
There might ye all have seen arms and harness
Full rare and rich, and eke well wrought with gold,
And with embroidery and steel, I'm told;
The shields, gold-beaten helms, and trappings for
The horses, and the mailed coats and armóur;
Lords gaily dressed on coursers full of fire,
With knights of retinue and many a squire,
Some nailing spears, some helmets fastening,
Some rubbing shields, or them with straps lacing;
And, as it should be, none were there left idle.
There stood the foaming steed, its golden bridle
Champing, and there the armourer also,
With file and hammer riding to and fro;
Yeomen and commoners, the games to see,
Some armed with staves, as thick as they could be;
Pipes, trumpets, kettle-drums, the air resounds
As in a battle with their martial sounds;
The palace, too, with people filled anon,
Here three, there ten, in conversation,
Divining what would happen to the two.
And some said thus, and some it should be so:
Some were for him who had a shaggy beard,
Some for the bald, or him who was thick-haired;

Some thought that man looked grim and he could fight;
This had an axe of twenty pounds weight quite.
And thus the palace was full of surmise,
For long after the sun commenced to rise.
Great Theseüs, who long had lain awake,
Roused by the noise and music men did make,
Still kept his chamber in his palace fair,
Until the Theban knights, who honoured were
Alike, were both into the palace brought.
He at his window sat, all in deep thought,
Arrayed as 'twere a god upon a throne.
And thither pressed the people many a one,
That they might see him and show him respect,
And do whate'er he bade them, in effect.
A herald on a scaffold cried out "Ho,"
Until the noise ceased in the crowd below;
And when he saw the people all were still,
Of Theseüs he thus expressed the will.
"The lord hath thought, with great discretion,
That there would be too much destruction
To noble blood, if fought out in the guise
Of mortal battle was this enterprise;
Wherefore, in order that they may not die,
He will his first intention modify.
No man therefore on pain of loss of life,
Arrows, or darts, or pole-axe, or short knife,
Into the lists shall send or thither bring;
And short swords with sharp points made for stabbing,
No man shall draw, or e'en bear by his side.
Again, no man shall at his fellow ride

More than one course with sharply-pointed spear;
Let him then fight on foot, if so he care.
And he that comes to grief shall captured be,
And not be slain, but to a stake shall he
Be brought, which shall be placed on either side,
And there shall go perforce, and there abide.
And if it happen that the chief be ta'en
On either side, or shall perchance be slain,
Then shall the tournament no longer last.
God speed you! go and lay on thick and fast;
With long sword and with mace now fight your fill;
Go on your ways; this is the great lord's will."
The voices of the people reached the skies,
So loudly shouted they with joyful cries:
"God save to us a lord who is so good,
And truly doth not wish to shed our blood!"
Loud brayed the trumpets, and with melody,
Forth to the lists rode off the company,
As was arranged, right through the city large,
All hung with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.
Full like a lord this duke the first did ride,
With these two Theban knights on either side,
And next them rode the queen and Emily,
And after them another company
Of knights and others, each in his degree,
And thus they passed right through the great city,
And at the lists they all arrived at length.
The sun had scarce begun with fullest strength
To shine, when Theseüs was set on high,
With his Hippolyta and Emily,
And other ladies, each in her degree,
And to the seats pressed all the company.

Westward, through gates, above which Mars did stand,
Arcite and eke the hundred of his band,
With banners red, all entered right anon;
And at the self-same moment Palamon
Came under Venus, eastward in that place,
With banner white, and with a cheerful face.
In all the world, if sought for up and down,
Ne'er would be found, for there were never known,
Two companies so nearly matched as they;
For there were none so clever as could say,
Which of the two the advantage had in truth,
In worthiness, or great estate, or youth,
So even a selection had been made.
And in two goodly ranks they were arrayed.
And when their names read out were everyone,
Of errors in their numbers were there none.
Then were the gates shut, and 'twas cried aloud:
"Your duty do, ye knights all young and proud."
The heralds ceased their riding up and down,
And loudly brayed the trump and clarion;
There is no more to say, but east and west
In went the spears each firmly to its rest;
In went the spurs into the horse's side;
There men were seen who well could joust and ride;
There shivered shafts upon the shields full thick,
And many a manly breast there felt the prick.
Uplifted spears were twenty feet in height;
Out came the flashing swords, as silver bright;
There many a helm was cut into a shred,
Out burst the blood in dismal streams and red;

With mighty maces bones were smashed to dust;
Here one through thickest of the throng would thrust;
There strong steeds stumbled as they fell down all;
Here one rolled under foot as doth a ball;
And there one on his feet with stout truncheon
Fought, while his friend was with his horse knocked down.
One through the body thrust, was quickly caught,
And spite of struggles to the stake was brought,
As was agreed, and there forced to abide;
Another captured was the other side.
And Theseus allowed them time for rest,
That they might eat and drink, as they thought best.
Full oft throughout the morn these Thebans two
Together met, and caused each other woe;
And each unhorsed the other twice that day.
No tiger in the vale of Galaphey,[1]
When stolen has been her whelp, when but a mite,
Was e'er so cruel a hunter as Arcite,
Who thus with jealous heart sought Palamon.
In Belmarye[2] ne'er lived a fell lión,
That hunted is, or mad for want of food,
That of its victim craved so for the blood,
As Palamon to slay his foe Arcite.
Their jealous strokes crashed through their helmets bright,
And down the blood ran both their sides all red.
An end must come to everything, 'tis said:

[1] There was a town called Galapha in Mauritania, upon the river Malva, which may perhaps have given name to the vale here meant. —*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Belmarye was a Moorish kingdom in Africa.

And ere the sun was gone to rest, the bold
And stalwart King Emetrius seized hold
Of Palamon, as he fought with Arcite,
And made his sword deep in his flesh to bite;
And with the aid of twenty did him take
Unyielding, and him draw unto the stake.
And in the attempt to rescue Palamon,
The sturdy King Ligurge was beaten down,
And King Emetrius, for all his strength,
Was borne from off his horse a good sword's length,
Thus struck by Palamon, though 'twas for nought,
For he was ta'en and to the stake was brought.
His fearless heart, alas! could help him nought,
For there he must abide when he was caught,
According to the regulation.

Who now was sad as woeful Palamon,
Who could no more go out again to fight?
And when great Theseüs had seen the sight,
Unto the men who fought thus everyone,
He cried out, "Hoo! no more, for it is done!
I will judge truly and impartially.
Arcite of Thebes shall have my Emily,
Whom by his fortune he hath fairly won."

And there arose among the crowd anon,
A shout for joy, so loud and great withal,
It seemed as if the very lists would fall.

And what now could fair Venus do above?
What could she say? What did this queen of love?
She wept so sore, on finding that she could
Not have her way, great tears fell where she stood.
She said: "I'm put to shame without a doubt."

Saturne replied: "Daughter, say nought about

This thing, Mars hath his will, his knight his boon,
And by my head thou shalt have thy turn soon."
The trumpeters with their loud minstrelsy,
And heralds, who so loudly yell and cry,
Proclaimed the joy felt for the Lord Arcite.
But list and hear how that the noise was quite
Hushed, as befell a miracle anon.
The fierce Arcite with helmet off, and on
A courser, so that he might show his face,
Rode slowly down the whole length of the place,
While gazing upward on his Emily,
Who, too, looked on him with a friendly eye,
(For women, here to speak in general,
The favourite of fortune follow all,)
And cheerful was in mien, as in his heart.
Out of the ground a fire was seen to start,
(By Pluto sent, as had besought Satúrne,)
From which the frightened horse essayed to turn,
And leapt aside, and, as it leapt, fell down;
And ere that Arcite proper care had shown,
It pitched him off, and right on to his head,
And, where he fell, he lay, as he were dead,
With breast-bone broken by his saddle-bow.
And black he lay as is a coal or crow,
So had the blood all run into his face.
Anon they bore his body from the place,
With hearts full sore, unto the duke's paláce,
When he was cut from out of his harnéss,
And in a bed full fair they laid him quick,
For he was conscious, though so sorely sick,
And cried out alway after Emily.
Duke Theseüs, with all his company,

Soon homeward went to Athens his city,
With much rejoicing and festivity.
Although this accident did thus befall,
He would in nought dishearten them at all.
Men said besides that Arcite would not die,
And would be healéd of his malady.
And for another reason did they fain
Rejoice, that, of them all, none had been slain,
Although some were sore hurt, and there was one,
Who with a spear was pierced through the breast-bone.
For other wounds, and for the broken arms,
Some ointments had, and salves, and some had charms;
Of medicines made of herbs and sage, some gave
Their comrades drink, and hoped their limbs to save.
Wherefore this noble duke, as well he knew,
Each comfort gave and honour paid where due,
And made great revel all throughout the night
For all these noble strangers, as was right.
Nor was there any taunting with defeat,
Save as at jousts and tournaments is meet;
In truth there had been no defeat at all,
For but a misadventure 'tis to fall.
To that man, who alone had fought the foe,
Though harassed much in arm, and foot, and toe,
And who required some twenty knights to take
Him struggling and unyielding to the stake,
Whose horse, indeed, was driven wild with staves,
By men on foot, by yeomen, and by knaves,
To him it was accounted no great vice,
And none him could accuse of cowardice.

Wherefore Duke Theseüs permitted praise
(For fear that else he jealousy might raise,)
To be adjudged to one side and the other,
As though each to his comrade was the brother;
And gave them gifts, to each in his degree,
And held high festival for fully three
Days; and the kings led worthily
Out of his town, far towards their own city.
And home went every man the nearest way;
There was no more but, "Farewell, have good day!"
And I will say no more now of this fight,
But speak of Palamon and of Arcite.
Sad swelled the breast of Arcite, and the sore
Pain at his heart increaséd more and more.
The clotted blood, despite the leech's skill,
Corrupted, but stayed in his body still,
So that nor blood from veins, nor eke cuppíng,
Nor drink of herbs, help or relief could bring.
The virtue expulsive, or animal,
And for that property called natural,
Could not the venom void or yet expel.
The pipes, too, of his lungs began to swell,
And every muscle, from his breast right down,
Steeped was in poison and corruption;
And nought availed, nor hope of life would give,
The vomiting, or purging laxative;
All was so damaged in that region,
Nature no longer held dominion.
And when once Nature leaves you in the lurch,
Farewell physic; go bear the man to church.
All said at length that this Arcite would die,
And thereupon he sent for Emily

And Palamon, who was his cousin dear;
And spake he, as ye shall hereafter hear.
"Nought may the woeful spirit in my heart
Declare, how I with pain and sorrow smart,
To you, my lady, whom I love the most.
But I bequeath the service of my ghost
To you, o'er every other kind creature,
Since that my life no longer may endure.
"Alas, the woe! Alas, the pains so strong,
That I for you have suffered for so long!
Alas, O death! alas, my Emily!
Alas, we two must now part company!
Alas, queen of my heart! alas, my wife!
My love! who thus hath caused to end my life!
What is this world? What doth man ask to have?
Now with his love, and now in his cold grave,
Alone and without any company.
Farewell, my sweetest foe, my Emily!
Now softly take me in thine arms to-day,
For love of God, and list to what I say.
"I have here with my cousin Palamon
Had strife and rancour many a day that's gone,
For love of you, and through my jealousy.
And Jupiter so guide my soul to try
To speak now of a servant properly,
To mention all his qualities truly,
That is to say, truth, honour, and knighthood,
Wisdom and lowliness, high kindred, good
Estate, and freedom, and all virtues rare,
And may my soul accurséd be, I swear,
If in this world I know a single one,
As worthy to be loved as Palamon,

Who loveth you, and will do all his life.
And if you ever would become a wife,
Forget not Palamon, the noble man."
And with these words his speech to fail began,
And from his feet up to his breast there came
The cold of death, which soon him overcame.
And yet, although in both his arms he knew
The vital strength was gone, as cold he grew,
The intellect, which, weakened more and more,
Yet clear had kept in his heart sick and sore,
Then only failed him, when the heart felt death;
Dimmed were his eyes, and slowly failed his breath,
But on his lady yet he cast his eye,
And his last words were, "Mercy, Emily!"
His spirit changed abode, and thence went there,
Whence I ne'er came, and cannot tell the where.
Therefore I stop, for I'm no sorcerer,
Nor do I keep of souls the register;
Nor do I wish the opinions here to tell
Of others, although written where they dwell.
Arcite is cold, let Mars his soul maintain;
Now will I speak of Emily again.
Then loud cried Emily and Palamon,
And Theseüs his sister took anon,
And, swooning, bore her from the corpse away.
What use is it for me to waste the day,
In telling how she wept both morn and eve?
For in such cases women oft so grieve,
When thus from them have their loved husbands gone,
That they must either weep, when left alone,
Or else would have so sad a malady,
That in the end they certainly would die.

Infinite were the sorrow and the tears
Of agéd folk, and folk of tender years,
In all the town, when thus died this Theban.
For him sore weepeth every child and man;
So great the weeping was not, I maintain,
When Hector was brought home all freshly slain
To Troy; alas! what pity was felt there,
Scratching of cheeks and tearing out of hair.
"Why wouldst thou die?" loud did the women cry,
"Who haddest gold enough and Emily."
None were there who could cheer up Theseüs,
Saving his agéd father Egeüs,
Who of the world the transmutation
Knew, since he'd seen it turning up and down,
Grief after joy, and joy succeeding woe:
He had examples of them each to show.
"Just as there never died a man," quoth he,
"Who hath not lived on earth in some degree,
Right so no man will ever live," he said,
"In all this world, but will some time be dead.
This world is but a thoroughfare for woe,
And we are pilgrims passing to and fro,
Death is the end of every worldly sore."
And on the subject, too, he spake much more
To this effect (and wise was all he said),
So that the people might be comforted.
Duke Theseüs with all his busy care,
Now cast his thoughts, and well considered where
The sepulture of Arcite should be made,
So that to him most honour might be paid.
At length he came to this conclusion,
That, whereas first Arcite and Palamon

Had had for love a battle them between,
There in that very grove, so sweet and green,
Where he had felt his amorous desires,
And his distress, and lover's ardent fires,
He would a fire make, and accomplish all
The rites and office of the funeral;
And gave command anon to hack and cut
Down ancient oaks, and in a row to put
The beams, arranged so that they might be burned.
His officers, as his commands they learned,
Rode off anon, or ran with swiftest feet.
And next, this noble duke sent, as was meet,
To bring a bier, and it all overspread
With cloth of gold, the richest that was made.
And in a like suit clothéd he Arcite,
And gloves upon his hands he placed full white,
Upon his head a crown of laurel green,
And in his hand a long sword bright and keen.
With visage bare he laid him on the bier,
And therewith wept so sore, 'twas sad to hear.
That he might shown be to the people all,
When it was day he brought him to the hall;
Loud rose the cries of lamentation.

Then came this woeful Theban Palamon,
With flowing beard and rugged ashy hair,
With garments black, and stained with many a tear,
And (without counting weeping Emily)
The saddest one of all the company.
And that the service might more noble be,
And more consistent with his high degree,
Duke Theseüs men ordered forth to bring
Three steeds, with bright steel trappings glittering,

And covered with the arms of Lord Arcite.
Upon these steeds, which noble were and white,
There sat three men, of whom one bore his shield,
The next his spear in both his hands did wield,
The third man bore with him his Turkish bow,
Of burnished gold the case was, as I know;
And rode they forth, and with but little cheer,
Toward the grove, as ye in time shall hear.
The noblest of the Greeks, then present there,
Upon their stalwart shoulders bore the bier,
And with slow step, and eyes all wet and red,
Throughout the city, by the chief street led
The way. That street was hung with black, as was
Each one through which the cortège had to pass.
Upon the right hand went old Egeüs,
And on the other side Duke Theseüs,
With vessels in their hands of gold full fine,
All filled with honey, milk, and blood, and wine;
Then Palamon came with his company;
And after them came woeful Emily,
With fire in hand, as 'twas the custom then,
To bear to funerals of all great men.
Such labour was there in the preparation,
Of that fire-making on that sad occasion,
That with its top the heavens themselves were reached,
And twenty fathoms wide the arms they stretched;
That is to say, the boughs were placed so broad.
Of straw first was there laid full many a load;
But how the fire was on the summit made,
And how the trees were called, that there were laid,
Oak, aspen, elm, birch, willow, alder, fir,
Plane, laurel, ash, box, chestnut, and poplar,

Maple, thorn, beech, yew, hazel, cornel tree,
How they were felled, shall not be told by me;
Nor how the mighty gods ran up and down,
When driven from their habitation,
In which they dwelt in perfect rest and peace,
Nymphs, Fauns, and Hamadriades;
Nor how the wild beasts and the bright birds all
In fear fled, when the wood began to fall;
Nor how the ground appalled was at the light,
That ne'er was wont to see the sun full bright;
Nor how the pile with straw was overlaid,
And then with dry sticks cut in three was made,
And then with green wood and with spicery,
And then with cloth of gold and jewelry,
And garlands hanging with full many a flower,
The myrrh, and incense with such sweet odóur;
Nor how Arcite was placed on this, alas!
Nor of the wealth that round his body was;
How Emily, as was the usual
Custom, the fire lit of the funeral;
Nor how she swooned, when thus was made the fire,
Nor what she spake, nor what was her desire;
Nor of the jewels men in the fire then cast,
As soon as it was great, and burning fast;
Nor how one threw a shield, and one a spear,
And some the very clothes that they did wear,
And cups all full of wine, and milk, and blood,
Into the fire, that burnt as doth dry wood;
Nor how the Greeks with a great company,
Three times around the fire rode mournfully
Upon the left hand, and with loud shouting,
And with their spears thrice made a clattering;

Nor how the ladies thrice began to cry;
Nor how led homeward was sad Emily;
Nor how Arcite was burnt to ashes cold;
Nor of the wake that men therewith did hold
All that same night, or how the Greeks may play
Their wake[1] games, I, in truth, care nought to say;
Who, naked, wrestled best, with skin oily,
Who bore him least disadvantageously.
Nor will I tell, how that they everyone
Home went to Athens, when the games were done.
But shortly to the point now will I wend,
And thus will make of my long tale an end.
By process and by length of certain years,
All ceaséd was the mourning, and the tears,
Among the Greeks, by general assent.
Then, as I think, there was a parliament
At Athens held, for certain purposes,
Amongst which were discussed alliances
With divers countries, and arrangements made,
That full respect to Thebans should be paid.
And thereupon this Theseüs anon
Caused to be summoned noble Palamon,
Unknown to him what was the reason why;
And, in his black clothes dressed all mournfully,
He came, at his command, full hastily.
Then sent Duke Theseüs for Emily.
When they were seated and hushed was the place,
And Theseüs had waited for a space,

[1] The custom of watching with dead bodies is probably very ancient in this country. Chaucer seems to have confounded the wake plays, as they were called, of his own times, with the funeral games of the ancients.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Ere any word came from his learnéd breast,
His eyes he down cast, as it pleased him best,
And with a mournful visage sighed he still,
And after that, right thus he spake his will.
"The prime mover and cause of things above,
When he first made the fairy chain of love,
Succeeded well, and high was his intent;
He knew the why and what thereof he meant;
For with that fairy chain of love he bound
The fire, the air, the water, and the ground,
In certain bounds, from which they may not flee;
And that same prince and mover eke," quoth he,
"Established hath in this sad world below
A certain limit, what, we do not know,
For each who in this place is born, or was,
Beyond which day none are allowed to pass,
Though to cut short life man permitted is;
There is no need to cite authorities,
For it is provéd by experience:
But I desire here to declare my sense.
Thus may men by this order well discern,
That this mover is constant and eterne.
Well must man know, unless a fool be he,
That each part of the whole a part must be.
For nature was not in its primal state,
A part or fragment of a thing create,
But was a thing complete, and perfect made,
Till in the course of seasons it decayed.
And therefore he of his most wise foresight,
Hath so arranged well all his plans aright,
That species and all progressions
Endure shall alway by successions,

And not eternal be without a lie.
This may'st thou know and see, too, with thine eye.
"Behold the oak, what lengthened nurturing
It hath, since first it doth begin to spring,
And what a lengthened life, as you may see,
And yet at last all withered is the tree.
Observe, too, how the hardest stone we know,
On which beneath our feet we tread and go,
Doth waste to nought as it lies by the way.
The broadest stream will dry become some day.
Great towns we see decrease, and pass away.
Thus ye perceive that all things have their day.
Of men and women we see well also,
That of necessity in one of two
Events, that is, in youth or else old age,
Each one must die, the king as well as page;
Some in their beds, and some drowned in the sea,
Some in the open fields, as men may see.
There is no help, all must go that same way.
Thus everything must die, as I here say.
Who causeth this but Jupiter the king?
Who is the prince and cause of everything,
Twisting and turning all to suit his will,
From whom it is derived, the truth to tell.
Against whose will, there is no man alive
To whom it doth the least avail to strive.
"Then is it prudent, as it seems to me,
To make a virtue of necessity,
And bear that well which we may not eschew,
And specially that which to all is due.
And whoso grumbleth, hath but wisdom small,
And rebel is to him who guideth all.

And certainly that man hath most honóur,
Who dieth in his glory and his power,
When he is certain of an upright name;
He doth not put himself nor friend to shame,
And happier should his friend be at his death,
When, full of honour, is withheld his breath,
Than when his name all weakened is with age;
For soon forgotten is e'en great courage.
Thus is it better for a worthy fame,
For man to die when best is known his name—
To wish it otherwise is wilfulness.
Why do we grumble? Why feel heaviness
Because Arcite, the flower of chivalry,
Departed is, with honour and glory,
Out of the joyless prison of this life?
Why grudge now you, his cousin and his wife,
This lot to him, who loved you both so true?
Can he you thank? Nay, God knows, as do you,
That you, his soul, and eke yourselves, displease,
And yet to wish him back you cannot cease.
"What may I now conclude from this story,
Save after woe that we should merry be,
And thank great Jupiter for all his grace?
And ere that we depart from out this place,
I read that we should make of sorrows twain,
One perfect joy outliving all past pain.

* * * *

"Sister," quoth he, "I give my full assent,
And with advice here of my parliament,
That you on Palamon, your own true knight,
Who serveth you with heart and will and might,

And alway hath since first he saw your face,
Shall some compassion show, out of your grace,
And take him for your husband and your lord:
Give me your hand, for our wills must accord.
Now show what pity there may be in you.
He is a king's own brother's son, par Dieu;
And though but a poor bachelor he were,
Since he hath served you for so many a year,
And hath for you had such adversity,
All should be reckoned up, it seems to me,
For gentle mercy ever should do right."
Then spake he thus to Palamon the knight:
"I trow it little needeth my pressing,
To cause you to assent unto this thing;
Draw near, and take her, and no more despond."
Betwixt them was there made anon the bond,
Which men call either wedlock or marriage,
By all the counsel and the baronage.[1]
And so with fullest bliss and melody,
This Palamon thus wedded Emily.
And God, who all this great wide world hath wrought,
Sent him that love, which he so dear had bought,
And thenceforth Palamon, with joy and wealth,
Long lived in bliss, in affluence, and health,
And Emily him loved so tenderly,
And he her always served so courteously,
That there, between the two, was never heard
A jealous or e'en any angry word.
Thus ended Palamon and Emily;
And God save all this noble company!

[1] Barons.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

First Part.

In Syria once there dwelt a company
Of merchants rich, who were discreet and true,
And everywhere they sent their spicery,
And clothes of gold and satins rich of hue;
Their merchandise so cheap was and so new,
That every one was pleased in their affairs
To join, and eke to sell to them his wares.

One day the masters in this business
Arranged that they their ways to Rome would wend;
Were it for pleasure or trade purposes,
No other messenger would they there send,
But came themselves to Rome, that is the end;
And in that place, that to advantage showed
Best for their plans, they took up their abode.

These merchants then remainéd in that town
Such time as pleased them, and 'twas thus by chance,
That it befel, the excellent renown
Of the Emperor's[1] young daughter, Dame Constánce,
Reported was, with every circumstance,
Unto these Syrian merchants day by day,
In such a manner as I here shall say.

This was the common voice of every man—
"Our Emperor of Rome, as all may see,
A daughter hath, that since the world began,
To speak as well of goodness as beauty,
Ne'er was there such another as is she;
I pray to God from evil her to screen,
And would that of all Europe she were queen.

"In her is such great beauty without pride,
Such youth too without greenness or folly;
To all her works virtue is e'er her guide,
Her modesty hath slain all tyranny.
She is a mirror of all courtesy;
Her heart the chamber is of holiness,
Her hand, the minister of bounteousness."

And all they said was just, as God is true.
But to my tale, now to return I mean;
These merchants freighted all their ships anew,
And, when they had this blissful maiden seen,
They home to Syria went full glad, I ween,
And did their business as they'd done of yore,
And flourished well: I cannot tell you more.

[1] According to Mr. Skeat, the Emperor here alluded to was Tiberius Constantine, who was Emperor of the East, A.D. 578.

Now it befel, these merchants stood in grace
With him, who was the Sultan of Surrye;[1]
For when they came from any foreign place,
He would, of his benignant courtesy,
Make them good cheer, and ask them busily
For tidings of strange lands, some news to glean
Of wonders that they might have heard or seen.

Amongst some other things, especially
The merchants of Dame Constance had him told,
And of her noble manner so fully,
That this same Sultan longed so to behold
Her face, and in his memory to hold
It ever, that his one anxiety
Was that he might her love till he should die.

'Tis possible that in that same large book,
Which men have called the heavens, it written was
With stars, at that time when his birth he took,
That he for love should have his death, alas!
For in the tiny stars, more clear than glass,
Is, God knows, written, if we could it read,
The death of everyone: 'tis so indeed.

In stars, full many a winter passed and gone,
God wrote the death of Hector, Achilles,
Pompey, and Julius, ere they were known;
The strife of Thebes, too; and of Hercules,
Of Samson, Turnus, and of Socrates,
The death; but men's wits ever are so dull,
That no man well can read them at the full.

[1] Syria.

This Sultan for his privy council sent,
(This tale in short before you here to place,)
And unto them declared all his intent,
And said for sure, "Save that he might find grace
With this same Constance, in a little space,
He would be dead," and charged them speedily,
To find out for his love some remedy.

As many men, so many things they said,
And arguments discussed they up and down;
And many a subtle reason forth they led;
They spoke of magic, and deception,
But, finally, they in conclusion,
Could not in this or that advantage see,
O'er marriage, and they did in that agree.

Then were they in a great perplexity,
By reason (here to put it to you plain),
That there was such a great diversity
Betwixt their laws, and, as they did explain,
They thought, "No Christian prince would ever deign
To wed his child under our laws so sweet,
That were us taught by Prophet Mahomet."

He answered, "Rather than that I should lose
Constance, I without doubt will christened be:
I must be hers, I may none other choose.
I pray you cease your arguments with me;
Save now my life, and strive unceasingly
To gain her, who my life hath in her care,
For in this woe to live I cannot bear."

What needeth any long description?
I say by treaties and diplomacy,
And by the Pope's own mediation,
And all the Church and all the chivalry,
That to the downfall of idolatry,
And to the furtherance of Christ's laws dear,
Things were agreed to, as ye soon shall hear.

How that the Sultan, and his baronage,[1]
And lieges all should with him christened be,
And how he should have Constance in marriáge,
With gold, though I know not the quantity,
And to this end should find enough surety;
A covenant was sworn on either side:
Fair Constance, may Almighty God thee guide!

Now would some men expect me, as I guess,
To tell them, if I should it know by chance,
How the Emperor, in his great nobleness,
Provided for his daughter, Dame Constánce.
Well may men know that such an ordinance,
As was arranged then for so high a cause,
Cannot be told well in a single clause.

Bishops were sent with her their ways to wend,
With lords and ladies and knights of renown,
And other folk enough, this is the end;
And notified it was throughout the town,
That every man, with great devotion,
Should pray to Christ that He would this marriáge
Receive with favour, and speed this voyáge.

[1] All his barons.

The day at length was come for her to leave,
I say the woeful fatal day was come,
When she must go, however she might grieve,
And one and all set forward from her home.
Constance, who was with sorrow overcome,
Full pale arose, prepared her way to wend;
For well she saw there was no other end.

Alas! what wonder is it that she wept,
Who thus was sent to a strange nation,
Away from friends, who tenderly her kept,
And to be bound under subjection
To one, of whom she had so little known.
Husbands are always good, and were of yore,
As wives know well, I dare now say no more.

"Father," she said, "Constance, thy wretched child,
Thy youthful daughter fostered up so soft,
And you, my mother, ever meek and mild,
My chiefest joy, save only Christ aloft,
Constance, your child herself commendeth oft
Unto your grace; to Syria I go,
And never shall be seen again by you.

"Alas! unto the barbarous nation
I must now go, since thus it is your will,
But Christ, who died for our salvation,
So give me grace His wishes to fulfil,
And though I wretched die or suffer ill;
Women we know are born to play the rôle
Of slaves, and to be under man's control."

I trow at Troy, when Pyrrhus broke the wall,
Or Theseüs burnt Thebes, the great city,
Or e'en at Rome for deeds of Hannibal,
Who Romans vanquished in his battles three,
None heard such tender weeping for pity,
As in the house she was abandoning;
But go she must, and did she weep or sing.

O[1] firste moeuyng cruel firmament,
With thy diurnal sweigh that crowdést ay
And hurlest al from Est til Occident,
That naturelly wolde holde another way,
Thy crowding set the heuen in swich array
At the beginning of this fiers viage,
That cruel Mars hath slayn this mariage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lord is helplees falle, allas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.
O Mars, O Atazir, as in this cas!
O feble moone, unhappy ben thy pas!
Thou knyttest thee ther thou art not receyued,
Ther thou were wel, from thennes artow weyued.

Hadst thou, O Emperor of Rome, alas!
No wise philosopher in all thy town?
Is every day alike in such a case?
For fixing journeys may no choice be shown,
Not e'en by folk of high condition,
Or when the moment of a birth we know?
Alas! we are too ignorant or slow.

[1] This and the following stanza I have printed as Chaucer wrote them, as I found myself unequal to the task of rendering them into intelligible modern English.

Unto the ship was brought this woeful maid,
With great display and every circumstance.
"Now Jesus Christ be with you all," she said;
There was no more but, "Farewell, fair Constánce."
She tried hard to keep up her countenance.
And I'll her leave to sail in this mannér,
And will now turn again to my mattér.

The mother of the Sultan, well of vices,
Discovered had her son's too plain intent,
How he wished to renounce his sacrifices,
And right anon she for her council sent;
And they were come, to know what 'twas she meant;
And when these people all assembled were,
She sat her down, and spake as ye shall hear:

"My lords," quoth she, "ye know well every man,
How that my son intends, O cruel fate!
Soon to forsake the laws of our Koran,
Given by God's messenger to Mahomet.
But this I vow to God, the good and great,
That life shall rather from my body start,
Than Mahomet's law shall from out my heart.

"What should befall us under this new law
But thraldom to us all in every sense?
Besides to hell it surely would us draw,
For ceasing to give Mahomet credénce.
But, lords, will ye in me have confidence,
And, as I say, assent unto my lore,
And I will make us safe for evermore?"

They soon assented, and swore that they would
All live with her, and die, and by her stand;
And everyone, in the best way he could,
To help her would collect of friends a band;
And she thus took this enterprise in hand,
Which ye shall hear, as I shall tell you soon,
And to them all she spake right thus anon.

"We will pretend our old faith to forsake,
Cold water surely will not harm a wight,
And I will such a feast and revel make,
That I shall satisfy the Sultan quite.
For though his wife be christened e'er so white,
To wash away the red, she more will need,
Though she much water bring with her indeed."

O Sultaness, root of iniquity,
Virago, thou Semyram[1] the Secónd,
O serpent with thy figure womanly,
Like to the serpent that in hell is bound,
O feignéd woman, all that might confound
Virtue and innocence, through thy malíce,
Was bred in thee, the nest of every vice!

O Satan, envious since that same day
That thou wert chaséd from our heritage,
Of women thou dost know the olden way,
Thou madest Eve to bring us to bondáge.
Thou wilt fordo this Christian marriáge.
Thou makest women (well-a-day, the while!)
Thine instrument, whene'er thou would'st beguile.

[1] Semiramis.

This Sultaness, whom I thus vilify,
Let privily her council go away.
Why should I longer with this tale tarry?
She rode out to the Sultan on a day,
And told him that she would her faith gainsay,
And Christianity from priests accept,
Grieving that heathen she so long had kept.

Beseeching him to do her that honóur,
That she might give the Christian men a feast;
"To please them all I ever will labóur."
The Sultan said, "I will act, at your hest;"
And kneeling thanked her for her kind request—
So glad he was, he knew not what to say.
She kissed her son, and home she went her way.

Second Part.

At length these Christian folk all came to land
In Syria, with a great illustrious rout;
The Sultan quick a message sent by hánd
Unto his mother and the realm about,
And said his wife was coming without doubt,
And they rode out to meet the queen, we're told,
The honour of his kingdom to uphold.

Great was the crowd, and rich was the array
Of Syrians and Romans that were there;
The mother of the Sultan, rich and gay,
Received her with a face as full of cheer,
As any mother might her daughter dear;
And to the nearest city there beside,
They at a slow pace with great pomp did ride.

I doubt if the triumph of Julius,
Of which same Lucan maketh such a boast,
Was e'en more royal or more curious
Than the assembly of this blissful host.
But yet this scorpion, this woman most
Detestable, for all her flattering,
Devised her plans full mortally to sting.

The Sultan went himself soon after this
So royally, it wondrous was to tell,
And welcomed her with much of joy and bliss.
And thus in mirth and joy leave them to dwell;
The fruit of this affair is what I tell.
When the time came, men thought that it was best,
To stop the revels and to go to rest.

The time arrived when this old Sultaness
Prepared the feast of which I have you told,
And to the feast the Christian folk did press
In general, yea, both the young and old.
There did men feast, and royalty behold,
And dainties more than any could suppose,
But all too dear they bought it ere they rose.

O sudden woe! that ever dost succeed
To worldly bliss, and causest bitterness;
End of the joy of all our work indeed;
Woe followeth quickly on our happiness.
List to advice touching thy heedlessness;
On thy most happy day bear well in mind,
That unseen woe or harm may be behind.

For shortly here to tell you in a word,
This Sultan and the Christians everyone,
Were all hewn down and stabbed there at the board,
Excepting only Dame Constance alone.
This bad old Sultaness, this curséd crone,
Had with her friends done this accurséd deed,
For she herself the country wished to lead.

There was not one converted Syrian there,
Who of the wishes of the Sultan knew,
Who was not slain ere that he was aware.
And Constance they took hastily, 'tis true,
And in a ship all rudderless, God knew,
They did her place, and bid her learn to sail
From Syria again back to Itayle.[1]

A certain treasure that she'd brought with her,
And, truth to tell, of food abundantly
They had her given, and eke some clothes to wear,
And forth she sailed upon the briny sea.
O Constance, full of sweet benignity,
Who art an Emperor's young daughter dear,
May He, who is of fortune Lord, thee steer!

She crossed herself, and with a piteous voice
Unto the cross of Christ thus cried out she:
"O dear, O blessed altar, holy cross,
Red with the lamb's own blood, full of pity,
That washed the world from old iniquity,
Me from the fiend, and from his claws now keep,
The day that I shall drowned be in the deep.

[1] Italy.

"Victorious tree, salvation to the true
And good, (that only worthy was to bear
The king of heaven with his wounds all new,
The spotless lamb, who hurt was with the spear,
And who drove fiends from all now here, now there),
On which thy faithful limbs they did extend,
Keep me and give me power my ways to mend."

For years and days onward this creature sped,
Throughout the sea of Greece[1] unto the strait
Yclept Morocco, just as chance her led;
And many a sorry meal it was she ate,
And for her death full often did she wait,
Ere that the winds and wild waves would her drive
Northward, where she was destined to arrive.

Men might me ask why she had not been slain?
Eke at the feast, who could her body save?
And I reply to that demand again,
Who savéd Daniel in the horrid cave,
Where every man save he, master and knave,
Was slain by lions, ere he was aware?
No one but God, who thus of him took care.

God wished to show a wondrous miracle
By her, that we might see His mighty deeds;
Christ, who to aid us ever is able,
By certain means oft, as he knows who reads,
To gain some end, will do a thing that needs
More than a man's wit, who has not the sense
To understand His prudent providence.

[1] The Mediterranean is really here meant.

Now, since she had not at the feast been slain,
Who kept her from the drowning in the sea?
And who kept Jonah in the fish, again,
Till he was spouted up at Nineveh?
Well may men know it was no one but He,
Who kept the Hebrew people from drowning,
When, with their feet dry, through the sea passing.

Who was't that bade the spirits[1] of tempést,
Which power have to annoy the land and sea,
"Both north, and south, and also east and west,
Do not annoy the sea nor land nor tree!"
He who commanded that, truly was He
That from the tempest aye this woman kept,
As well when she awoke as when she slept.

How was't the woman meat and drink did have?
Who for three years and more gave her victual?
Who fed the Egyptian Mary in a cave,
Or in the desert? Was not Christ able?
Five thousand folk it was as wonderful
With but five loaves and fishes two to feed.
God sent abundance to her in her need.

She, driven forth, into our ocean came,
And passed through our wild sea, until at last
Beneath a castle that I cannot name,
Far in Northumberland the waves her cast.
And in the sand her vessel stuck so fast,
That thence it would not move for all that tide:
The will of Christ was that she there should bide.

[1] Revelation vii. 1–3.

The castle Constable down went he there
To see this wreck, and o'er the ship he sought,
And found this weary woman full of care;
He also saw the treasure that she brought.
In her own language mercy she besought,
And prayed him her to kill there as she knelt,
Thus to release her from the woe she felt.

A kind of corrupt Latin did she speak,
But this the Constable did understand,
And when he wished to search no more the wreck,
This woeful woman brought he to the land;
She thankéd God, there kneeling on the sand;
But who she was she would to no man say,
For weal or woe, e'en should she die that day.

She said that she so dazed was by the sea,
That she had lost her memory, by her troth.
The Constable for her showed such pity,
And eke his wife, that they wept in good sooth.
She was so diligent and without sloth
To serve and please them all there in that place,
That all her loved who looked upon her face.

The Constable and Hermengild his wife
Were pagans, as the people everywhere,
Hermengild her loved right as her life,
And Constance with them long remainéd there,
And offered prayers with many a bitter tear,
Till Jesu had converted through His grace
Dame Hermengild, who lived there in that place.

In all that land no Christian dared to dwell;
All Christian folk had fled from that country,
When first unto the power of pagans fell
The regions of the North by land and sea—
To Wales then fled the Christianity
Of ancient Britons, dwelling in this isle;
This meantime was her refuge for a while.

But yet the Christians were not so exiled,
That there were not some, who in privacy,
Honoured their Christ, and heathen folk beguiled;
And nigh the castle were there dwelling three,
The one of them was blind, and could not see,
Save that it were with eyes within his mind,
With which men oft may see when they are blind.

Bright was the sun, as on a summer's day,
On which the Constable and wife also,
And this Dame Constance took the nearest way
Toward the sea, a furlong off or two,
There to amuse them and roam to and fro;
And in their walk this poor blind man they found,
Crooked and old, and with his eyes fast bound.

"In name of Christ," this blind old Briton cried,
"Dame Hermengild, give me my sight again."
This lady at the sound was terrified,
Lest that her husband (shortly to explain,)
Would her, for loving Jesus Christ, have slain,
Till Constance made her bold, and bade her work
The will of Christ, as daughter of His kirk.

The Constable surprised was at the sight,
And said to them, "What meaneth this affair?"
Him Constance answered, "Sire, it is God's might
That helpeth folk out of the devil's snare."
And she her faith so fully did declare,
That she the Constable, ere it were eve,
Converted, and on Christ made him believe.

The Constable was not lord of the place,
Where he found Constance wrecked upon the sand,
But kept it strongly, many a winter's space,
For Alla, King of all Northumberland,
Who was full wise, and worthy with his hand
Against the Scots, as men may all well hear,
But now I will return to this affair.

Satan, who ever waits us to betray,
In Constance saw all her perfection,
And cast about how he might her repay,
And made a young knight, who dwelt in that town,
Love her so with a fond affection,
That verily he thought she would him kill,
Unless he was allowed to have his will.

He wooèd her, but it availed nought,
She would not do a sin in any way;
And out of spite, he turnéd in his thought,
To make her die a shameful death some day.
And when the Constable had gone away,
Full privily upon a night he crept
Into Dame Hermengild's room whilst she slept.

Weary and tired eke with her orisons
Slept Constance, and this Hermengild also;
This knight by Satan's base temptations,
All softly to the bedside did he go,
And cut the throat of Hermengild in two,
And laid the bloody knife by Dame Constánce,
And went his way; and God cause him mischance!

Soon home returned this Constable again,
With Alla eke, who King was of these lands,
And saw his wife, who cruelly was slain,
For which full oft he wept and wrung his hands,
And in the bed found, as the matter stands,
The knife by Constance; ah! what could she say?
For very woe her wits went all away.

Unto King Alla told was the mischánce,
And eke the time, and where, and in what way,
That in a ship was found this Dame Constance,
As ye hereinbefore have heard me say.
His kingly heart felt pity and dismay,
When he saw one of such benignity
Fall into so great woe and misery.

For as the lamb that to its death is brought,
So stood this innocent before the King;
This wicked knight who had this treason wrought,
Falsely affirmed that she had done this thing.
But ne'ertheless there was a great mourning
Among them all, who said, "No one could guess
That she could do so great a wickedness."

For they had seen her ever virtuous,
And loving Hermengild right as her life.
Of this bore witness each one in that house,
Save he who Hermengild slew with his knife.
This noble King detected some motive
In this witness, and thought he would, forsooth,
Look into this with care, to learn the truth.

Alas! Thou, Constance, hast no champion,
Nor canst thou fight thy cause, so well-a-day!
But He who died for our redemption,
And Satan bound (who lies still where he lay),
May He be thy strong champion to-day!
For save Christ doth perform some miracle,
Thou guiltless will be slain, 'tis probable.

She knelt down on her knees, and thus she said,
"Immortal God, who savéd once Susanna[1]
From false reproach, and thou, merciful maid,
Mary,[2] I mean, the daughter of St. Anna,
Before whose child the angels sing Hosanna,
If I be guiltless of this felony,
My succour be, or else I now shall die."

Have ye not seen some time the pallid face,
Amongst a crowd, of one who hath been led
Unto his death, who hath no hope of grace,
And from his cheek the colour so hath sped,
That men might know that face, so hard bestead,
Amongst all faces in that company?
So Constance stood, and gazed round piteously.

[1] See the Apocrypha. [2] The Virgin's Mother was called Anna.

O queens who live all in prosperity,
And duchesses and ladies everyone,
Have some pity on her adversity;
An emperor's daughter she stands alone;
She hath no one to whom to make her moan.
O blood royal! thou standest in this dread,
Far be thy friends away in thy great need!

This Alla King had such compassion
(As noble hearts are filled oft with pity),
That from his eyes ran fast the water down.
"Now hastily go fetch a book," quoth he,
"And if this knight will swear to us how she
This woman slew, we will then us advise,
Whom we may will to be named our justice."

A Briton copy of the Gospels four
Was fetched, and on this book he swore anon
She guilty was; and as that oath he swore,
A hand him smote upon the collar bone,
And down he fell at once as falls a stone,
And both his eyes they burst from out his face,
In sight of everybody in that place.

A voice was heard by all the people near,
That said, "Thou hast now slandered guiltlessness,
And charged our daughter in our presence here,
Thus hast thou done and yet I hold my peace."
Amazed the crowd stood, who did witness this,
As dazéd folk will oft stand everyone,
For fear of vengeance, save Constance alone.

Great was the fear and eke the penitence
Of them, who had a wrong suspicion
Against this Constance, full of innocence;
And for this wonder, in conclusion,
And through the maiden's mediation,
The King and many another in that place
Converted were, thanks be to God's good grace!

The wicked knight was slain for his untruth,
By judgment of King Alla hastily;
And Constance for him pity felt forsooth;
And Jesus after this of His mercy,
Made this King Alla wed full solemnly
This holy maid, who was so bright and sheen,
And thus of Constance did Christ make a queen.

But who was woeful (if I must not lie)
At this same wedding, if not Donegild, who
Was the king's mother, full of tyranny?
She thought her cursed heart would burst in two;
She did not wish that her son should do so;
And thought it a disgrace that he should take
So strange a creature thus his wife to make.

I wish not of the chaff nor of the straw
To make so long a tale, as of the corn.
Why should I here relate all that men saw
At this marriage, or how men fared that morn,
Who blew upon a trumpet or a horn?
The fruit of every tale one ought to tell:
They ate, and drank, and danced, and sang as well.

* * * *

All in good time a boy was born to her,
And Maurice at the font they did him call;
The Constable sent for a messenger,
And wrote unto his king, who named was Alle,[1]
How this great happiness did him befall,
And other advantageous tidings sent.
He took this letter and away he went.

Thinking to gain some good, this messenger
Unto the king's own mother rode away,
And in fair language thus saluted her:
"Madame," quoth he, "you may be glad and gay,
And thank your God a thousand times this day;
My lady queen a child hath without doubt,
To the great joy of all this realm about.

"Lo, here are letters sealed about this thing,
That I must bear with all the haste I may;
If you will ought send to your son the King,
I am your servant all the night and day."
Donegild to him replied, "At this time, nay;
But here all night I wish that thou should'st rest,
To-morrow will I tell thee my behest."

This messenger drank deeply ale and wine,
And stolen were his letters privily,
Out of his box, while he slept like a swine;
And counterfeited was with subtlèty
Another letter, wrought full sinfully,
Unto the King addressed of this affair
From this same Constable, as ye shall hear.

[1] Alla. Another instance of an alteration in the termination of a name to suit the author's purposes.

The letter said: "The queen delivered was
Of such a horrid devilish creature,
That in the castle none so hardy was,
Who for a while would dare there to endure.
The mother was an elf, they all felt sure,
Come there by chance, by charms, or sorcery,
And every one hated her company."

Sad was the king when he this letter read,
But to no one he told his sorrow sore,
But thus he wrote with his own hand instead:
"Welcome the gift of Christ for evermore
To me, that am now learnéd in His lore;
Lord, welcome be Thy will, whate'er is sent,
My will to Thine shall be subservient!

"Heed well this child, if it be foul or fair,
And eke my wife, until my home-coming;
Christ, when He will, may send to me an heir
More pleasing and less grief occasioning."
This letter sealed he, secretly weeping,
Which to the messenger was taken soon,
And forth he went, nought else was to be done.

O messenger filled full of drunkenness,
Strong was thy breath, thy limbs they faltered aye,
Thou didst betray all with thy thoughtlessness;
Thy mind was gone, thy talking like a jay.
Thy face distorted in a dreadful way!
Where drunkenness doth reign in any rout,
There is no counsel hid without a doubt.

O Donegild, weak is English such as mine,
To tell thy malice and thy tyranny!
And therefore to the fiend I thee resign,
Let him relate about thy treachery!
Fy, man-like, fy! O nay, by God, I lie;
Fy, fiend-like spirit, for I dare say well,
Though thou wert there, thy spirit was in hell!

This messenger came from the king again,
And did at the king's mother's court alight.
And, when this messenger arrived, she fain
Would please him in whatever way she might.
He drank until he made his girdle tight;
And slept, and loud he snored, while in this guise,
All night, until the sun began to rise.

Again were stolen his letters every one,
And others counterfeited in this wise:
"The king his constable commands anon,
On pain of hanging and of stern justice,
That he shall not permit in any wise
Constance within his kingdom to abide,
For three days and a quarter of a tide;[1]

"But in the ship where he her found of yore,
Her and her youthful son, and all her gear,
He shall replace, and push it from the shore,
And charge her ne'er again to come back there."
O Constance, well might then thy spirit fear,
And sleeping, in thy dreams be wretched aye,
Since this Donegild had planned thee thus to slay!

[1] An hour. She was not to remain any time after three days.

This messenger the morrow, when he woke,
Unto the castle went the nearest way,
And to the constable the letter took;
And when he saw what did this letter say,
Full oft he cried, "Alas!" and "Well-a-day!"
"Lord Christ," quoth he, "how can this world endure,
So full of sin is many a vile creatúre?

"O mighty God, if thus it be Thy will,
Since Thou art rightful Judge, how can it be,
That Thou the blood of innocents dost spill,
And leavest bad folk in prosperity?
Alas! O thou good Constance, woe is me!
That thy tormentor I must be, or die
A death of shame; for no escape have I!"

They wept both young and old in all that place,
When that the king this curséd letter sent,
And Constance with a deadly pallid face,
The fourth day down unto the ship she went.
But ne'ertheless she took in good intent
The will of Christ, and kneeling did uplift
Her voice and said: "Lord, welcome be Thy gift!

"He that me kept once from the unjust blame,
Whilst I was dwelling on the land with you,
He can me keep from harm and eke from shame,
On the salt sea, although I see not how.
As strong as e'er He was, so is He now.
In Him I trust, and in His mother dear,
He is to me my sail, and will me steer."

Her little child lay weeping on her arm,
And kneeling piteously to him she said:
"Peace, little son, I will do thee no harm."
With that her kerchief took she from her head,
And o'er his little eyes it softly laid;
And in her arms to sleep she lulled it fast,
And to the heavens above her eyes she cast.

"Mother," quoth she, "and maiden bright, Mary,
True 'tis that woman was the instrument
By which mankind was lost and doomed to die,
For which thy child upon a cross was rent;
Thy blessèd eyes they saw all His torment;
Then is there no comparison between
Thy woe and any woe of man, I ween.

"Thy child thou sawest slain before thine eyes,
And yet now lives my little child, parfay!
Now lady bright, to whom in woe man cries,
Glory of womanhood, fair maid I say,
Haven of refuge, and bright star of day,
Pity my child, and in thy gentleness,
Have pity on the rueful in distress!

"O little child, alas! what is thy guilt,
Who never didst a sin as yet, parde,
Why will thy cruel father have thee killed?
O mercy, my dear Constable," quoth she;
"Pray let my little child dwell here with thee;
And if thou dar'st not save him, fearing blame,
Still kiss him once more in his father's name!"

Therewith she lookéd back toward the land,
And said: "Farewell, my husband pitiless!"
And up she rose and walkéd down the strand
Toward the ship; the crowd around did press,
And e'er she prayed her child to hold his peace;
She took her leave, and with devout intent
She crossed herself; and to the ship she went.

Victualled the vessel was without a doubt
Enough to last her for a lengthened space;
And other things she could not do without,
She had as well, now praiséd be God's grace!
May He send wind to take her from this place
And bring her home! I can no better say;
But on the sea she sped forth on her way.

Third Part.

Alla came home, soon after this was done,
Unto his castle, of which I you told,
And asked them where his wife was and his son.
The Constable then felt his heart grow cold,
And plainly what had happened he him told,
As ye have heard, I can tell it no better,
And showed the King his seal and eke his letter.

And said he: "Lord, as you commanded me,
On pain of death, I have done, I maintain."
This messenger tormented was, till he
Obliged was to confess all clear and plain,
From night to night, in what place he had lain.
And thus, by skill and careful questioning,
Known was it how this harm did first begin.

The hand was known, too, that the letter wrote,
And all the venom of this curséd deed,
But in what way I cannot here denote.
The effect was this, that Alla, out of dread,
His mother slew, that men might plainly read,
She was a traitress to allegiance.
And thus came this old Donegild to mischance.

The sorrow that King Alla day and night
Felt for his wife and for his child also,
There is no tongue that can of it indite.
But now will I again to Constance go,
Who floated on the sea in pain and woe
For five long years and more, by God's command,
Ere that her ship approached unto the land.

Beneath a heathen castle at the last,
Of which the name nought in my text I find,
Constance and eke her child the sea up cast.
Almighty God, who saveth all mankind,
Bear Constance and her little child in mind,
Who fallen have in heathen lands again,
So near her death, as I will soon explain.

Down from the castle came there many a wight,
To gaze upon the ship and on Constánce;
But shortly from the castle in the night
The lord's own steward (God send him mischance!),
A thief (who'd been a Christian once by chance),
Came to the ship alone, and said he should
Her lover be, whether or not she would.

Sad was this wretched woman thus alone,
Her child it cried, and she cried piteously;
But blesséd Mary helped her right anon,
And as she struggled well and mightily,
The thief fell overboard all suddenly,
And in the sea was drowned for punishment,
And thus hath Christ to Constance succour sent.

* * * *

How could this feeble woman have such strength
Her to defend against this renegade?
O Golias,[1] unmeasurable in length,
How was it that thee David struck down dead,
So young, and when in armour not arrayed?
How did he dare look on thy dreadful face?
Well may we see that it was by God's grace!

Who gave to Judith nerve or hardiness
To slay King Holophernes in his tent,
And to deliver out of wretchedness
God's people? I say, touching this intent,
That just as God spirits of vigour sent
To them, and saved them out of their mischánce,
So sent He might and vigour to Constánce.

Forth went her ship right through the narrow mouth
Of Gibraltar and Septe,[2] driving alway,
Sometimes to west, sometimes to north and south,
Sometimes to east, for many a weary day,
Till Christ's good mother (blesséd be she aye!)
Arrangéd had with infinite goodness,
To make an end of all her heaviness.

[1] Goliath. [2] Ceuta, on the opposite coast of Africa.

Now will I cease with Constance, and a word
Will speak about the Roman Emperor,
Who had from Syria by letters heard
Of slaughtered Christian folk, and dishonóur
Done to his daughter by a false traitor,
I mean the curséd, wicked Sultaness,
Who at the feast had wrought such wickedness.

For which this Emperor had sent anon
His Senator, with royal ordinance,
With other lords, God knows, full many a one,
On these same Syrians to take vengeánce.
They burnt and slew, and brought them to mischance
For many a day; but shortly, in the end,
They home to Rome prepared their ways to wend.

The Senator returned victorious
Towards Rome, and as he sailed full royally
He met the ship, the story telleth us,
In which sad Constance sat full piteously.
Nought knew he as to who she was, or why
She seemed in such a plight; indeed she would
Nought tell about herself, though die she should.

He brought her unto Rome, and to his wife
He gave her, and her youthful son also;
And with the Senator she passed her life.
Thus could our Lady bring out of her woe
Sad Constance, and full many another too.
And for a long time dwelt she in that place,
In holy works employed of her good grace.

The Senator's own wife aunt[1] to her was,
But for all that she knew her none the more;
I will no longer tarry in this case,
But to the King, of whom I spake of yore,
Who for his wife had wept and sighed so sore,
I'll turn, and Constance leave, as I have shown,
Under the Senator's protection.

King Alla, who had thus his mother slain,
Filled with remorse was, and it fell by chance,
That (here to put it to you short and plain)
To Rome he came, to do all such penance,
As was imposed by papal ordinance
In any way, and Jesu Christ besought
Him to forgive the wicked works he'd wrought.

The news anon throughout the town men bore
How Alla King would make a pilgrimage,
(As harbingers arrived there him before).
The Senator, according to uságe,
Rode him to meet, with all his lineage,
As much to show his own magnificence,
As to do any king a reverence.

Good cheer then made this noble Senator
Unto the King, and he to him also;
Each of them showed the other great honóur;
And so it fell, that, in a day or two,
This Senator unto the King did go
To feast; and shortly, if I shall not lie,
Constance's son went in his company.

[1] Helen, the wife of Arsemius, was daughter of Sallustius, brother of the Emperor Tiberius, and Constance's uncle. Thus Helen was really Constance's first cousin.—*Skeat.*

Some say 'twas at the wish of Dame Constánce,
The Senator the child took to the feast;
I may not tell you every circumstance,
Be that as it may be, he went at least.
But true it is, that, at her own behest,
Before the King, within a little space,
The child stood up and looked him in the face.

This Alla seeing him, was filled with wonder,
And to the Senator he said anon,
"Who is the pretty child who standeth yonder?"
"I do not know," replied he, "by Saint John!
Mother he hath, but father hath he none
Of whom I know." And him he did astound,
By telling him how 'twas the child was found.

* * * *

This child to Constance was as like, by chance,
As any creature possibly could be;
And Alla kept the face of Dame Constánce
In memory, and thereon muséd he,
If this child's mother could indeed be she
Who was his wife, and sighed, and when he was able,
He from the table went as quick as possible.

"Parfay," thought he, "a phantom's in my head!
I may with reason well feel confident,
That in the briny sea my wife is dead."
And afterwards this was his argument:
"How can I tell if Christ hath hither sent
My wife by sea, just as He once her sent
Unto my country, whence away she went?"

And after noon home with the Senator
Went Alla, thus to see his wife perchance;
This Senator showed Alla great honóur,
And hastily he sent to find Constánce.
But, trust me well, she little wished to dance,
When she the reason why they'd sent did hear;
She scarce upon her feet could stand for fear.

When Alla saw his wife he did her greet,
And wept so, it was pitiful to see.
For at the first look that he on her set,
He knew well verily that it was she.
And she for sorrow dumb stood as a tree;
So was her heart shut in her great distress,
When she remembered all his wickedness.

Twice where she stood she fainted in his sight;
He wept and made excuses piteously:
"May God," quoth he, "and all His saints so bright,
So surely on my soul have now mercy,
For guiltless of your suffering am I,
As is Maurice my son so like your face;
Else let the fiend me fetch out of this place!"

Long was the sobbing and the bitter pain,
Ere that their woeful hearts to grieve would cease;
Great was the pity to hear them complain,
And with complaints their woes did but increase.
I pray you all my labour to release;
I cannot tell their woe until to-morrow,
I am so weary speaking of their sorrow.

But finally when thus the truth she wist
That Alla had been guiltless of her woe,
I trow more than an hundred times they kissed,
And such a bliss was there betwixt the two,
That, save the joy that lasteth evermo,[1]
I know of nothing like it, that a man
Hath ever seen, since first the world began.

Then did she pray her husband tenderly,
So she might have no further cause to pine,
That he would pray her father specially,
That, of his majesty, he would incline
To vouchsafe on some day with him to dine.
She prayed him eke that he should, by the way,
No word of her unto her father say.

Some tell the story, how the child Maurice
This message took unto this Emperor;
But Alla, as I think, was far too wise,
To send to one held in so great honóur
As he who was of Christian folk the flower,
A little child, but let us rather deem
He went himself, and so it may well seem.

This Emperor consented courteously
To come to dinner, as he was besought;
And well I read he gazed attentively
Upon this child, and on his daughter thought.
Alla went to his inn, and as he ought,
Preparéd for the feast in every wise,
As would in his experience suffice.

[1] Evermore.

The morrow came, and Alla 'gan to dress,
And eke his wife, this Emperor to meet,
And forth they rode with joy and happiness,
And when she saw her father in the street,
She down alighted, and fell at his feet.
"My father, Constance your young child," quoth she,
"Is now clean gone out of your memory.

"I am your daughter Constance," added she,
"Whom formerly you sent unto Surrye.[1]
Father, 'tis I, who in the briny sea
Was put alone, and there condemned to die.
And now, good father, I for mercy cry,
Send me no more unto those heathen lands,
But thank now this kind lord who by you stands."

Who of the piteous joy could well tell all,
Felt 'twixt the three, who thus had met that day?
But of my tale here make an end I shall;
The day goes fast, I will no more delay.
They went unto the feast in great array;
In joy and bliss I leave them all to dwell,
A thousandfold more than I e'er could tell.

This child Maurice since then was Emperor
Made by the Pope, and lived full Christianly.
To Christ's Church ever did he great honóur;
But I will now pass all this story by,
Of Constance is my tale especially.
In olden Roman tales men well may find
Maurice's life, I bear it not in mind.

[1] Syria.

This same King Alla, on an early day,
With Constance, loved so for her purity,
Returned to England by the nearest way,
Where they both lived in joy and peacefully.
It lasted but a while, in verity.
Joy in this world for long will not abide,
From day to night it changeth as the tide.

Who ever lived in such delight one day,
That he was not disturbed by conscience,
Or anger, or desire, or in some way,
Envy, or pride, or passion, or offence?
I only say to end up this sentence,
That but a little while, O sad mischance!
Lasted the bliss of Alla with Constance.

For death, that takes from high and low his rent,
When but a year had passed, as I should guess,
Out of this world this good King Alla sent,
For whom sad Constance felt full great distress.
Now let us pray that God his soul may bless!
And Constance finally, the truth to say,
Toward the town of Rome she went her way.

Thus unto Rome this holy creature went,
And all her friends discovered safe and sound,
And there her life, without adventure, spent;
And when she had at length her father found,
Down on her knees she fell upon the ground,
Weeping for joy so blissful to behold,
She praiséd God a hundred thousand fold.

In alms-giving, with many a virtuous deed,
They lived, and ne'er apart their ways did wend,
And till death parted them, this life did lead.
And now fare-well, my tale is at an end;
Now Jesu Christ, who of His might can send
Joy after woe, so guide us by His grace,
And keep us all who now are in this place. Amen.

THE PRIORESS'S TALE.

O Lord, our Lord, Thy name, how marvellous
It is throughout the wide world spread, quoth she;
For not alone is honour precious
Accorded Thee by men of dignity,
But by the mouth of babes Thy charity
Proclaiméd is, for even at the breast
They sometimes sing Thy praises with the rest.

Wherefore in honour, as I here best may,
Of Thee, and of the spotless lily flower,
That did Thee bear, and is a maid alway,
To tell a story will I now labóur;
Not that I may thus bring her more honóur,
For she is honour, of all good the source,
And souls can best help, save her Son of course.

O mother maid! O maid and mother free!
O Bush unburnt, burning in Moses' sight,
Who didst draw down, through thy humility,
The Holy Ghost, that did on thee alight:
Of whose grace, when thy heart was thus made bright,
Conceivéd was the wisdom of the Father,
Help me to tell this in thine honour rather.

Lady! thy bounty, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,
No tongue can e'er express in any sense;
For long, O Lady, ere men pray to thee,
Thou dost anticipate us graciously,
And gain for us the light, by thy own prayer,
Which may us guide unto thy Son so dear.

My skill I feel so feeble, blesséd Queen,
With which to speak of thy great worthiness,
That I can scarce the weight sustain, I ween,
But like a child of twelve months old or less,
Who can but barely any word express,
Just so fare I, and therefore I you ask,
To guide my song and lessen thus my task.

There was in Asia in a great city
Amongst the Christian folk a Jewerye,[1]
Supported by a lord of that country,
For sake of wicked gain and usury,
Hateful to Christ and to His company;
And through the street men might or ride or wend
Their ways, 'twas free, and open at each end.

A little school of Christian folk there stood
Down at the farther end, at which there were
A heap of children, born of Christian blood,
Who in that school acquired, each year by year,
Such kind of learning as was taught them there,
That is to say, to sing and read, as good
Small children ought to do in their childhood.

[1] Like our "Jewry," a district inhabited by Jews.

Amongst these children was a widow's son,
A little chorister, seven years of age,
Who day by day came to the school alone,
And who, where'er he saw a blessed imáge
Of Christ's own Mother, as was the uságe,
And as he had been taught, knelt down to say
His *Ave*, ere he passed along the way.

For so this widow her small son had taught,
Our blesséd Lady, Christ's own Mother dear,
To worship alway, and he ne'er forgot,
For a good child will quickly learn, 'tis clear;
And ever, when I think of this affair,
Saint Nicholas stands up in my presénce,
For he, so young, to Christ did reverence.

This little child, his little book learning,
As he sat in the school at his primér,
Heard children *Alma redemptoris* sing,
As they'd been taught, from their antiphoner;[1]
And, as much as he durst, he ventured near,
And listened to the words and to each note,
Until he knew the first verse off by rote.

What all the Latin meant he little guessed,
For he so tender was of age and young;
But on a day he his companion pressed
To expound it to him in his mother tongue,
And to explain the reason why 'twas sung;
This prayed he him to construe and declare,
Full many a time upon his knees all bare.

[1] Anthem book.

His friend, somewhat the elder of the two,
Answered him thus: "This song, I have heard say,
Was made for us by our good Lady, who
Wished with it we might greet her, and might pray
For help and succour on our dying day.
I can no more expound in this mattér,
I learn the song, but do not know grammár."

"And was this song made out of reverence
For Christ's own Mother?" said this little one;
"Now surely will I, with great diligence,
So learn it, ere hath Christmas come and gone;
E'en if I must my primer leave alone,
And shall be beaten three times in an hour,
I'll learn it, and our Lady thus honóur."

His friend him taught home walking privily,
From day to day, till he knew it by rote,
And then he sang it well and fearlessly,
From word to word according to each note,
Twice every day it passéd through his throat,
As out to school, and homeward back he went;
And on Christ's Mother were his thoughts intent.

As I have said throughout the Jewerye,[1]
This little child as he came to and fro
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
"*O Alma redemptoris*" evermo.[2]
The sweetness of Christ's Mother had him so
Pierced to the heart, to her he wished to pray,
And could not cease from singing by the way.

[1] "Jewry." [2] Evermore.

Our enemy, the serpent Satan, who
Hath ever in Jews' hearts his hornet's nest,
With anger swelled, and said: "O race Hebrew!
Is this a thing that seems to you honést,
That such a boy shall walk where he thinks best,
And laugh at you, and sing of subjects, such
As show contempt for all thy laws so much?"

From thenceforth all these wicked Jews conspired
This innocent out of this world to chase;
And thereupon they an assassin hired,
Who in an alley hid him in some place,
And as the child passed by with gentle face,
This curséd Jew him seized and held him fast,
And cut his throat and in a pit him cast.

I say that him into a pit they threw,
Wherein these wicked Jews, so tells the tale,
Their offal cast. O curséd Herods new!
What may your evil doings you avail?
Murder will out, and surely ne'er will fail;
And since thereby is God's own honour spread,
Blood crieth out against a curséd deed.

* * * *

This poor old widow waited all that night
For her young child, but she of him saw nought;
And thereupon as soon as it was light,
With face all pale with dread and anxious thought,
She to the school went, and elsewhere him sought,
Till she enabled was the fact to glean,
That in the Jewry he had last been seen.

With mother's pity in her breast enclosed,
She went, like one who is out of her mind,
To every place, where she might have supposed
'Twas likely she her little child would find;
And ever on Christ's Mother meek and kind
She cried, until at last it so befell,
Among the Jews she searched for him as well.

She then besought and prayed, too, piteously
Of every Jew who dwelt there in that place,
To tell her if her child e'er passed them by.
They all said "Nay;" but Jesu, of His grace,
After a while, her led straight to that place
Wherein the boy was cast, and there beside
The pit, most sadly for her son she cried.

O God, who canst thus cause to be extolled
Thyself by mouths of babes, great is Thy might!
This gem of chastity, this emerald,
And eke of martyrdom this ruby bright,
As he, with throat all cut, there lay upright,[1]
He "*Alma redemptoris*" loud did sing,
Until the whole place round began to ring.

The Christian folk, as through the street they went,
Soon all began to wonder at this thing,
And hastily they for the provost sent,
And he anon came without tarrying,
And praiséd Christ, who is of heaven the king,
Whose Mother is such honour to mankind,
And then he ordered men the Jews to bind.

[1] On his back gazing upright. An expression of Chaucer's which occurs several times.

This child with piteous lamentation,
Uptaken was, singing his song alway;
And honoured by a great procession,
They carried him unto the next abbáy,
Where, swooning by the bier, his mother lay;
And scarcely could the people, who were there,
This second Rachel from the body bear.

With torment and with shameful death, each one
Of all the Jews, who of this murder knew,
The provost caused to die, and that anon;
He would to wickedness no favour show,
He shall have evil who doth evil do.
And first with horses wild he did them draw,
Then hung he them according to the law.

Upon his bier this innocent there lay,
Before the altar while the mass did last,
And then the abbot, with his monks, away
Them sped to bury the poor boy full fast;
And when they holy water on him cast,
Still spake the child, when sprinkled was the water,
And sang, "*O alma redemptoris mater!*"

This abbot was indeed a holy man,
As monks are alway, or else ought to be,
And this young child he to conjure began,
And said: "O child, I do beseech of thee,
In honour of the Holy Trinity,
Tell me what is the reason why you sing,
Since that your throat is cut to all seeming?"

"My throat, as you may see, is cut right through
My neckbone," said he, "and one of my kind[1]
Would have died, yea, most surely long ago,
But Jesu Christ, as you in books may find,
Wills that His glory may be kept in mind,
And for the honour of His Mother dear,
I still may sing, '*O Alma*,' loud and clear.

"This well of mercy, Christ's own Mother sweet,
I alway loved, far more than any thing,
And when my life I was about to quit,
To me she came, and bade me thus to sing
This Anthem truly, as I lay dying,
As ye have heard, and when I it had sung,
Methought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

"And therefore 'tis I sing, and sing I fain
In honour must of that kind maiden free,
Till from my tongue off taken be the grain;
And afterwards this maiden said to me,
'My little child, now will I come for thee,
Whenever from thy tongue the grain is taken,
Be not afraid, thou shalt not be forsaken.'"

This holy monk, this abbot, of whom I
First spake, drew out his tongue and took the grain,
And he gave up the ghost full quietly.
The abbot, when he saw this, felt such pain,
His salt tears trickled down his face like rain,
And straightway fell he flat upon the ground,
And still he lay, as if he had been bound.

[1] In the ordinary course of nature.

The monks, too, lay upon the cold pavement,
Weeping, and praising Christ's own Mother dear,
And afterwards they rose, and forth they went,
And bore away this martyr from the bier,
And in a tomb of marble white and clear
Enclosèd they his little body sweet;
There lies he now, God grant that we may meet.

O youthful Hugh of Lincoln,[1] slain also
By curséd Jews, as it is notable,
For it was but a little while ago;
Pray for us who are weak and blamable,
That of His mercy God so merciful
On us may His great mercy multiply,
Out of respect for His Mother Mary.

[1] The youthful Hugh of Lincoln was supposed to have been murdered at Lincoln by the Jews in 1255.—*Skeat.*

THE MONK'S TALES

I WILL bewail by way of tragedy,
The griefs of some who were of high degree,
And fell so that there was no remedy,
To save them out of their adversity;
For certes, when Fortune e'er doth wish to flee,
There is no man who can her course withhold;
Let no man trust to blind prosperity;
Be warned by these examples true and old.

Lucifer.

With Lucifer, though he an angel were,
And not a man, with him I will begin;
For, though for fortune angels little care,
From high estate yet fell he for his sin
Down into hell, and still remains therein.
O Lucifer! brightest of angels all,
Who Satan art, thou canst ne'er hope to win
Freedom from misery, which must thee gall.

Adam.

Lo, Adam, in the field of Damascene,[1]
With God's own mighty finger wrought was he,
And not a son of sinful man unclean,
And ruled all Paradise except one tree.
Never had worldly man so high degree
As Adam, till for acting wickedly,
He driven was from great prosperity
To labour, and to hell, and misery.

Samson.

Samson, whose birth was long prognosticated,
By angel's mouth, ere his nativity,
Who was to God Almighty consecrated,
And honoured eke, as long as he could see.
Ne'er was there such another man as he,
Whether we speak of strength or fearlessness.
But to his wives, his secret foolishly
He told, and slew himself for wretchedness.

Samson, this noble mighty champion,
Without a weapon, save his hands, they say,
He slew and rent in twain the fell lion,
While to his wedding walking by the way.
His faithless wife could please, and him would pray
His secret her to tell, and then untrue,
She to his foes his secret did betray,
And him forsook, and took a husband new.

[1] The notion of the creation of Adam in a field whereon afterwards stood Damascus, occurs in Peter Comestor's "Historia Scholastica" (ed. 1526, fol. vii.).—*Skeat.*

Three hundred foxes took he in his ire,
And all their tails in pairs bound with a band,
And then set all the foxes' tails on fire,
For he on every tail had knit a brand;
And they burned all the cornfields in that land,
And all the oliveyards and vineyards eke.
A thousand men he slew too with his hand,
And had no weapon but an ass's cheek.

When they were slain, so greatly thirsted he,
He well-nigh died, till he began to cry
To God to have on his pain some pitý,
And send him drink so that he might not die;
And from this ass's cheek, which had been dry,
From out the molar tooth there sprang a well,
Of which he drank, and God thus graciously
Him helped, as *Liber Judicum* can tell.

By very force, at Gaza, on a night,
In spite of Philistines in that citý,
The town gates he uplifted in his might,
And on his back them carried manfully
High on a hill, where all men might him see.
O noble, mighty Samson, loved and dear,
Hadst thou not told to women foolishly
Thy secret, never would have lived thy peer!

This Samson never cyder drank nor wine,
Nor on his head was razor used nor shear,
By order of the messenger divine,
For all his noble strength was in his hair;

And fully twenty winters, year by year,
He had of Israel the sovereignty.
But he shall weep anon full many a tear,
For women shall bring him to misery.

Unto his mistress Dalida[1] he told
That in his hair it was his strength all lay,
And falsely to his foemen she him sold;
And while he slept upon her lap one day,
She quickly clipped or cut his hair away,
And, having done so, told his enemies;
And when they found him weakened in this way,
They bound him fast and then put out his eyes.

But ere this woman thus his head did shave,
There was no band with which men could him bind,
But now was he in prison in a cave,
And there they made him at the handmill grind.
O noble Samson, strongest of mankind,
Who once wast judge, with glory and richés,
Now mayest thou sore weep with thine eyes blind,
Since thou from weal art fallen to wretchedness.

This captive's end was as I here shall say;
His enemies they made a feast one day,
And made him as their fool before them play,
And in a temple 'twas of great array.
But he at length there caused a fearful fray;
For he two pillars shook, and made them fall,
And down fell all the temple, and there lay,
And slew himself, and eke his foemen all.

[1] Dalilah.

That is to say, the princes every one,
And eke three thousand bodies were there slain,
When fell down thus the temple built of stone.
From speaking more of Samson I'll refrain.
Be warned by this example old and plain,
Let no men tell their counsels to their wives,
Respecting anything that they would fain
Keep secret, touching or their limbs or lives.

Hercules.

Of Hercules, the sovereign conqueror,
I sing of all his works and high renown,
And how for strength he gained so much honóur.
To slay and skin the lion [1] was he known;
He of the Centaurs soon the pride brought down;
He harpies [2] slew, those cruel birds, as well;
He golden apples took from the dragón;[3]
He brought out Cerberus,[4] the hound of hell.

He slew the cruel tyrant Busirus,[5]
And made his horse to eat him flesh and bone;
He slew the fiery serpent [6] venomous;
Of Achelous' [7] horns he broke off one;

[1] The first labour of Hercules was to kill the lion of Nemæa, whose skin he afterwards wore.

[2] For the sixth labour he was ordered to kill the carnivorous birds which ravaged the country near the lake Stymphalis in Arcadia.

[3] His eleventh labour was to obtain apples from the garden of the Hesperides, when he slew the dragon Ladon.

[4] And the twelfth and most dangerous of his labours was to bring upon earth the three-headed dog Cerberus.

[5] Here Chaucer seems to have confused the story of Busiris with that of Diomedes.

[6] Hercules for his second labour destroyed the Lernæan Hydra.

[7] Achelous was a river god, who entered the lists against Hercules,

And he slew Cacus[1] in a cave of stone;
He slew the giant Antæus[2] the strong;
He slew the grisly boar,[3] and that anon,
And bore the heavens upon his neck full long.

Ne'er lived the man, since that the world began,
Who slew so many monsters as did he.
His name throughout the great wide world soon ran,
Both for his strength and his benignity,
And every country round he went to see.
He was so strong that none could him oppose;
He pillars[4] placed at each extremity
Of this our world, as everybody knows.

A mistress had this noble champion,
Named Dianira, and as fresh as May,
And as old writers[5] all make mention,
She to him sent a shirt, new-made and gay.
Alas! this shirt, alas! and well-a-day!
Envenomed was so cunningly withal,
That, ere he had it worn for half a day,
It made his flesh from off his bones to fall.

---

and being inferior changed himself into an ox. Hercules broke off one of his horns, and Achelous being defeated, retired into his bed of waters.

[1] Cacus was a famous robber, represented as a three-headed monster and as vomiting flames.

[2] A giant of Libya, killed by Hercules.

[3] This was the fourth labour.

[4] This is an allusion to the "pillars" of Hercules.

[5] See Ovid's "Heroides," epistle ix., entitled "Deianira Herculi," and "Metamorphoses," lib. ix.

But ne'ertheless some writers[1] her excuse,
And say that one called Nessus it did make;
Whate'er the truth, I will not her accuse.
He wore the shirt upon his naked back,
Until his flesh became with poison black;
And when he saw there was no remedy,
Around his body he hot coals did rake,
For he deigned not by poison thus to die.

Thus died this worthy Hercules, the strong.
Who may on fortune trust? 'Twas ever so;
And he who pins his faith on fortune, long
Ere he aware be, is full oft laid low.
Full wise is he who doth himself well know.
Beware, for when to flatter Fortune shows
Herself inclined, then will she overthrow
You in such ways as you would least suppose.

Nebuchadnezzar.

The mighty throne, the treasure great indeed,
The sceptre, and the royal majesty,
That King Nebuchadnezzar had, we read,
By mortal tongue can scarce described be.
He twice Jerusalem, the great city,
Conquered, and vessels from the temple brought;
At Babylon his capital had he,
And there for glory and for pleasure sought.

The fairest children of the blood royal
Of Israel, he with him brought anon,
And thereupon his slaves he made them all.
Amongst the captives Daniel was one,

[1] Ovid's "Metamorphoses," lib. ix., 133.

And he o'er all for wisdom stood alone,
For of the king the dreams he could expound,
Whereas in Chaldee wise men were there none,
Who any explanation could have found.

This proud king made a statue all of gold,
Full sixty cubits long, and seven, 'tis said,
In breadth, which image he, both young and old,
Ordered to bow before and hold in dread,
And doomed him to be burnt in furnace red,
Who was of disobedience accused.
But Daniel of him was not afraid,
And with his two companions refused.

This king of kings so proud was and elate,
He thought that God, who sits in majesty,
Could never him deprive of his estate;
But suddenly he lost his dignity,
And like an animal he seemed to be,
And lived on hay, and in the fields would lie;
And in the rain, with beasts for company,
He wandered, till some years had passéd by.

And like an eagle's feathers grew his hair,
His finger-nails long as a bird's claws were,
Till God released him after many a year,
And made him sane; when he, with many a tear,
Thanked God, and lived throughout his life in fear
Of doing ought again that was not right,
And, till the day they laid him on his bier,
He knew that God was full of grace and might.

Belshazzar.

His son, Belshazzar called, who, in his turn,
Dominion held after his father's day,
Did nothing from his father's fate e'er learn,
For proud he was in heart as in array;
And an idolater he was alway.
His high estate did but increase his pride;
But Fortune cast him down, and there he lay,
And foes soon came his kingdom to divide.

A feast he made unto his great lords all,
Upon a day, and bade them merry be,
And next his officers began to call—
"Go bring now forth the vessels which," quoth he,
"My father, in his great prosperity,
Out of the temple of Jerusalem bereft,
And our high gods let us praise gratefully
For the honour that our parents have us left."

His wife, his lords, and all his concubines
Drank ever, while their appetites did last,
Out of these noble vessels sundry wines;
Till on a wall this king his eyes he cast,
And saw an armless hand that wrote full fast,
For fear of which he sighed and trembled sore.
This hand, which made Belshazzar so aghast,
Wrote *Mane, tekel, peres*, and no more.

In all that land magicians were there none,
Who could explain what these few letters meant;
But Daniel expounded them anon,
And said: "O King, God to thy father sent

Glory and honour, kingdoms, treasure, rent;
And he was proud, and stood in little dread
Of God, who therefore misery him sent,
And him bereft the kingdom that he had.

"He was cast out from all men's company,
With asses was his habitation,
And as a beast ate hay, when wet or dry,
Till to him came at length conviction,
That God of heaven hath full dominion
O'er every kingdom, and o'er each creatúre;
And then had God on him compassion,
And gave him back his kingdom and figúre.

"And thou, who art his son, art proud also,
For thou hast known all these things verily,
And art to God rebellious and His foe.
Thou drankest from His vessels daringly,
And eke thy wife and wenches sinfully
Have drunk their wine from these same vessels all,
And have their false gods praiséd cursedly;
And therefore will great woe thee now befall.

"This hand was sent from God, which on the wall
Wrote *Mane, tekel, peres*, trust to me;
Thy reign is done, thou weighest nought at all;
Divided is thy realm, and it shall be
Unto the Medes and Persians given," quoth he.
And that same night this king himself was slain,
And King Darius ruled o'er his country,
Though he to do so had no right, 'tis plain.

Lordlings, hereby a moral may ye take,
How little high rank to be trusted is,
For whene'er Fortune will a man forsake,
She takes away his kingdom and riches,
And oft will he his friends lose more or less.
For those friends whom a man through fortune finds,
Mishap will make his enemies, I guess;
This proverb true comes often to our minds.

Zenobia.

The great Zenobia,[1] Palmyra's queen,
As wrote the Persians of her nobleness,
So worthy was in arms and ever keen,
That none surpasséd her in fearlessness,
Nor in high birth, nor yet in gentleness.
Of Persia's royal blood was she descended;
I say not she excelled in loveliness,
But that her figure could not be amended.

From early childhood I find that she fled
From women's duties, and to woods she went,
And, when there, many a wild hart's blood she shed
With arrows swift, which after them she sent.
To catch the fleetest e'er was her intent,
And when she older grew, she oft would kill
Bears, lions, leopards, and in twain them rent,
And with her arms o'erthrew them at her will.

* * * *

[1] The poet in his story of Zenobia has doubtless followed the account given by Boccaccio in his "De Mulieribus Claris," cap. xcviii.—*Skeat.*

Her rich array can never here be told,
I speak of both her vessels and her dress;
She was all clad in jewelry and gold,
And though she hunted, failed not ne'ertheless
To gain some knowledge of strange languages,
When she had leisure, and much time would lend
To learned books, and seek with eagerness,
How she in virtue might her life best spend.

And shortly of this story here to treat,
So valiant was her husband and eke she,
That they both conquered many kingdoms great
In Eastern lands, with many a fair city,
Which had till then increased the majesty
Of Rome, and with a strong hand held them fast;
And ne'er their enemies could make them flee,
As long as Odenatus' life did last.

Their battles (who of them may wish to read)
Against Sapor[1] the king, and others too,
And how the events did each occur indeed,
Why conquered she, what claim she had thereto,
And eke of her misfortunes and her woe,
How men at length did her besiege and take,
Let him unto my master Petrarch[2] go,
Who wrote enough of this, I undertake.

[1] A King of Persia, A.D. 240–273.

[2] Tyrwhitt suggests that possibly Boccaccio's book had fallen into Chaucer's hands under the name of Petrarch, or that he had forgotten where he really got the story.

When Odenatus[1] died, she mightily
Dominion held, and, with her own strong hand,
Against her foes she fought so cruelly,
There was no king or prince in all the land,
Who was not glad if but her grace he gained.
With her alliances by bond made they,
So that she might not war upon their land,
But let them live and be in peace alway.

The Emperor of Rome, great Claudius,
And he who went before him, Galien,[2]
Were not sufficiently courageous,
Nor any Armenian, Egyptian,
Nor Syrian, nor eke Arabian,
To dare to meet this woman in fair fight,
Lest that they might by her own hands be slain,
Or by her followers be put to flight.

In royal robes were dressed her children two,
As heirs of their own father's kingdoms all,
And Hermanno and Thymalaö
Their names were, as the Persians did them call.
But fortune ever hath in honey gall;
And so this mighty queen's turn came at length;
From high dominion, Fortune made her fall
To wretchedness, and took away her strength.

Aurelian, when he, as Emperor,
The government of Rome had in his hands,
His plans laid to take vengeance upon her,
And with his legions started for the lands

[1] He was a prince of Palmyra, to whose titles and honours, his wife Zenobia succeeded. [2] The Emperor Gallienus.

Ruled by Zenobia; as the matter stands,
He made her flee, and in the end her caught,
And bound her and her sons both feet and hands,
And, when he'd won the land, to Rome them brought.

Amongst the many things that there were ta'en,
Her car, all wrought with gold and jewellery,
This noble Roman, this Aurelian,
Home with him brought, that all men might it see;
Before him, as he marched triumphantly,
She walked with gilt chains on her neck hanging,
And crowned she was, as one of high degree,
And bright with precious stones was her clothing.

Alas! Sad fortune, she that whilom was
Feared by all kings as well as emperors,
Now on her all the people gaze, alas!
And she who wore a helmet in her wars,
And towns and towers conquered too by force,
Must wear a woman's cap upon her head,
And she who bore a sceptre, with remorse
Must bear a distaff, thus to gain her bread.

Peter, King of Spain.

O noble, worthy Peter,[1] pride of Spain,
Whom fortune held so high in majesty,
Well might man of thy piteous death complain!
Out of thy land thy brother made thee flee;

[1] Peter was born in 1334, and reigned over Castile and Leon from 1350 to 1362. After a civil war he fell into the hands of his brother Henry, who killed him.—*Skeat.*

And when thou, at a siege, by subtlety,
Hadst been betrayed, and led unto his tent,
He with his own relentless hand slew thee,
Succeeding to thy kingdom and thy rent.

The field[1] of snow, with eagle black therein,
Caught with the lime-twig, coloured as the glede,
He brought about this cursedness and sin—
And Mauny[2] was the worker of this deed;
Not Charles' Oliver,[3] who ever heed
To truth and honour paid, but I contend,
Another Oliver, a Ganelon indeed,
Thus brought this worthy king to such an end.

Peter, King of Cyprus.

O worthy Peter, King of Cyprus, who
At Alexandria was victorious,
And to the heathen brought such bitter woe,
'Twas that which made thy subjects envious,
And 'twas because thou wert so chivalrous,
That they thee in thy bed slew on the morrow.
Thus Fortune guides her wheel, to torment us,
And from great joy brings often men to sorrow.

[1] Mr. Skeat in his valuable notes to this tale, says that "the first three lines of this stanza refer to Bertrand du Gueschlin, who contrived Peter's murder, by luring him to Henry's tent."

[2] "This second person was a certain Sir Oliver Mauny, whose name Chaucer conceals under the synonym of *wicked nest* (O. Fr. *mau ni*)."

[3] He goes on to say "that this Mauny was not like Charles the Great's Oliver, an honourable peer, but an Oliver of Armorika, a man like Charles' Ganelon, the well-known traitor. This passage has for long been a puzzle, but was cleared up by a letter by Mr. Furnivall in *Notes and Queries*, 4th Series, viii. 449."

Bernabo Visconti of Lombardy.

O Bernabo Visconti[1] of Milan,
Of pleasure god, and scourge of Lombardy,
Why should I not recount, unhappy man,
Thy ill-luck, when thou hadst climbed up so high?
Thy brother's son and thy two-fold ally,
(For he thy nephew was and son-in-law,)
Within his prison he thee caused to die,
But why or how no man e'er heard or saw.

Hugelyn of Pisa.

Of Hugelyn[2] of Pisa's mournful death
No tongue the tale can tell for sheer pity;
But close to Pisa is a tower, beneath
Which gloomy tower in prison put was he,
And with him were his little children three.
The eldest scarcely five years was of age.
Ah! Fortune, it was a great cruelty
Such little birds to put in such a cage!

Condemned was he to die in that prison,
For Roger, Pisa's bishop, full of lies,
Against him brought false accusation,
And thus the people were induced to rise,
And put him into prison in such wise
As ye have heard; of meat and drink he had
So little that it would him scarce suffice,
Especially as it was poor and bad.

[1] Bernabo Visconti, Duke of Milan, was deposed by his nephew and thrown into prison, where he died in 1385.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Chaucer himself has referred us to Dante for the original of this tragedy. See "Inferno," c. xxxiii.—*Tyrwhitt.*

And on a day befell, that at the hour,
When usually his food was to him brought,
The gaoler all the doors locked of the tower.
He heard it well, but ne'ertheless said nought,
But in his heart anon there fell a thought,
That they with hunger would him cause to die.
"Alas!" quoth he, "alas, that I was wrought!"
And therewith bitter tears fell from each eye.

His youngest son, who three years was of age,
Unto him said: "Why, father, do you weep?
When will the gaoler bring us our potáge?
Did you of bread no little morsel keep?
I am so hungry that I cannot sleep.
Now would to God that I might sleep for aye!
Then could not hunger in my stomach creep;
Save bread, there is nought else for which I pray."

Thus day by day the child began to cry,
Till in his father's bosom down it lay,
And said: "O, farewell, father, I must die."
Then he his father kissed, and died that day.
The father seeing he had passed away,
For woe his own two arms to bite and maim
Began, and said: "O Fortune, well-a-day!
Of all my woes, on thee I lay the blame."

His children thought that it for hunger was,
That he his arms thus gnawed, and not for woe,
And said: "O father, do not so, alas!
But rather eat the flesh from off us two;

Our flesh thou gavest us, and now also
It take and eat;" right thus they did him chide.
And after that within a day or two,
They laid them in his lap adown, and died.

Filled with despair he soon from hunger starved;
This was the mighty earl of Pisa's fate;
From high estate him fickle Fortune carved,
And brought him low, suffice it thus to state.
And whoso would know more, must read the great
Poet of Italy, without a doubt,
Dante yclept, who doth the whole relate
From point to point, nor doth a word leave out.

Nero.

Although great Nero was as vicious
As any fiend that lies in hell adown,
Yet he, as telleth us Suetonius,
This wide world long held in subjection,
For east and west, and south and north he won.
Of rubies, sapphires, and of pearls full white,
Were all his clothes embroidered up and down,
For he in wearing gems took great delight.

More delicate, more pompous of array,
More proud, was never emperor than he;
That same apparel which he wore one day,
From that time forth he ne'er again would see.
Nets of gold thread he had in great plenty,
To fish the Tiber, when inclined that way.
His very wish was law as his decree,
For Fortune as his friend would him obey.

* * * *

In youth a master had this Emperor,
To teach him literature and courtesy,
And, for morality, none were there more
Renowned than he, unless old records lie.
And this man while he had the mastery,
So wise he made him and obedient,
That it a long time was ere tyranny
Or other vice in him found any vent.

This Seneca (of whom I speak with pain),
Because that Nero lived of him in dread,
(For he from vices would him oft restrain
Discreetly by a word and not by deed,
And, "Sire," would say, "an emperor must need
Be virtuous, and should hate tyranny"),
He made the old man in a bath to bleed
From both his arms, and thus him caused to die.

This Nero was accustomed, we are taught,
In youth against his master oft to rise,
Which he when older a great grievance thought;
Therefore he made him perish in this wise.
But ne'ertheless this Seneca the wise
Chose in a bath to die with little pain,
Rather than suffer other cruelties;
And thus hath Nero his dear master slain.

It so befell that Fortune wished no longer
To favour Nero's pride at any price;
For though he might be strong, yet she was stronger;
And then she thought, "In truth, it is not nice

To set a man who is filled full of vice
So high, and him an emperor to call.
Down from his seat I'll have him in a trice,
When he least feareth, soonest shall he fall."

The people rose against him on a night,
Roused by his crimes, and when he them espied,
Out of his doors he hastened in a fright,
And at some house to find a friend he tried;
He knocked full loud, but aye, the more he cried,
The faster in his face each shut the door;
Then did he feel all humbled in his pride,
And went away, and durst call out no more.

The people cried, and rose their murmurs so,
That with his ears he heard how that they said,
" Where is this wicked tyrant, this Nero? "
He nigh went mad, he was so sore afraid,
And to his gods most piteously he prayed
For succour, but it might not thus betide.
He thought he would have died of nought but dread,
And ran into a garden there to hide.

And in this garden found he, so men say,
Two peasants sitting by a fire full red,
And he to them forthwith began to pray
To slay him, and to sever off his head,
So that his body, when thus he were dead,
Might not to his dishonour be abused.
Devoid of hope, his own life blood he shed,
And cruel Fortune laughed and was amused.

Holophernes.

Ne'er was there captain under any king
Who brought more kingdoms to subjection,
Or stronger was when foes encountering,
Or in his time was greater of renown,
Or was more puffed up with presumption,
Than Holophernes, whom false Fortune kissed
So tenderly, and led him up and down,
Until his head was off, ere that he wist.

Not only did the world hold him in awe,
For fear of losing wealth or liberty,
But he made everyone renounce their law.
"Nebuchadnezzar was a god," said he,
"No other gods should therefore honoured be."
Against his will no man dared set his face,
Save in Bethulia, a strong city,
Where dwelt Eliakim,[1] priest of that place.

But hear now of the death of Holophernes;
Amid his host he drunken lay one night,
Within his tent, large as a barn for corn is,
And yet, for all his pomp and all his might,
Judith, a woman, as he lay upright[2]
Sleeping, his head off smote, and from his tent
Full privily she stole quick out of sight,
And with his head unto her town she went.

* * * *

[1] Tyrwhitt remarks that the name of the high priest was Joachim (Judith iv. 6).

[2] A common expression with Chaucer, meaning that he was lying on his back, with his face upwards.

Alexander.

Of Alexander are the stories known
So well, all men of education
Have of his fortune heard and his renown.
This wide world, here to put it short, he won
By strength, and gained such reputation,
That men were glad to him for peace to send.
The pride of man and beast he both laid down,
And thus throughout the world from end to end.

Comparison could never yet be made,
Betwixt him and another conqueror;
For all this world of him was filled with dread,
He was the flower of knighthood; what was more,
Him Fortune made the heir of her honóur;
Save wine and women, nothing could assuage
His eagerness for fighting and labóur,
So was he full of leonine courage.

What praise were it to him, though I you told
Of King Darius, and some thousands more,
Of kings, and princes, earls, and dukes, all bold,
Conquered by him and brought to woe full sore?
I say, where'er man went, this conqueror
Possessed the world; what more should I relate?
For though I wrote or told you evermore
Of his knighthood, much would be left to state.

Twelve years he reignéd, as saith Maccabees;
Philip of Macedonia's son he was,
Who first was made king of the land of Greece.
O, worthy Alexander, O, alas!

That such a state of things should come to pass!
For you by your own subjects poisoned were;
Thus Fortune turned thy *six* into an *ace*,
And yet for thee she never wept a tear!

Who with their tears will help me to lament
Of gentleness and frankness the demise,
That wielded all the world where'er he went?
And yet his glory ne'er would him suffice,
So great his courage and his enterprise.
Alas! who will me help here to abuse
False Fortune, and base poison to despise,
Which two of all this woe I here accuse?

Julius Cæsar.

By wisdom, manhood, and by great labóur,
From humble life to royal majesty
Up rose he, Julius the Conqueror,
And soon won all the west by land and sea,
Either by strength of hand or by treatý,
And unto Rome he made them tributary.
And then of Rome the Emperor was he,
Until false Fortune turned his adversary.

O mighty Cæsar, who in Thessaly
'Gainst Pompey fought, who was thy son-in-law,[1]
And in the East was known for chivalry,
As far as where day first begins to dawe;[2]

[1] Pompey married Julia, the daughter of Cæsar.
[2] Old English for "dawn."

Thou through thy knighthood them all captured saw,
And slain, save some few who with Pompey fled,
And thus thou didst put all the East in awe;
Thank Fortune who thus stood thee in good stead!

Now for a while I will bewail the fate
So sad of Pompey, noble governor
Of Rome, who fled as I before did state;
I say one of his men, a false traitór,
Smote off his head, hoping to win favóur
With Julius, and him the head he brought.
Ah! Pompey, of the East the conqueror,
That Fortune unto such an end thee brought!

To Rome again returnéd Julius,
With laurel crowned, triumphantly,
But on a day Brutus and Cassius,
Who ever had of his estate envý,
In secret laid a foul conspiracy
Against this Julius, whom they did hate,
And fixed the place in which this man should die
With daggers, as I shall to you relate.

Unto the Capitol went Julius
One day, as he before had often gone,
And in the Capitol this false Brutus,
And all the other foes fell him upon,
And struck him down with daggers sharp anon
With many a wound, and left him thus to die;
But he ne'er groaned at any stroke save one
Or perhaps two, unless report doth lie.

So manly was this Julius in heart,
And so well loved he stately dignity,
That though his deadly wounds did sorely smart,
His mantle round his loins arrangéd he,
Lest ought to his dishonour men might see;
And as he lay there dying peacefully,
And knew he soon full surely would be dead,
Yet in remembrance held he dignity.

For further facts I Lucan[1] recommend,
And Flaccus[2] and Suetonius[3] also,
Who all this story wrote from end to end,
How Fortune to these conquerors was so
Indulgent first, and afterwards their foe.
No man can trust upon her favour long,
But alway must her watch where'er he go;
Witness with all these conquerors so strong.

Crœsus.

Rich Crœsus, who was once the King of Lyde,[4]
And of whom Cyrus was sore filled with dread,
Was taken in the midst of all his pride,
And to be burnt men to the fire him led.

[1] Lucan lived A.D. 39–65.
[2] Valerius Maximus.
[3] Suetonius was born about A.D. 70, and wrote the lives of the Cæsars.
[4] Lydia.

But such a rain was from the welkin shed,
The fire was quenched, so that he did escape;
But still he failed to be admonishéd,
Till Fortune on the gallows made him gape.

When he escaped, back home he quickly went,
For he all anxious was to war again;
He fancied, since thus Fortune had him sent
Back once, when he escapéd had through rain,
That by his foes he never could be slain;
Besides, too, having had a dream one night,
He felt so proud and therewithal so vain,
He set his heart on vengeance, come what might.

Upon a tree he was, he him bethought,
When Jupiter him washed both back and side,
And Phœbus eke a fair white towel brought,
To dry him with, and thus increased his pride;
And to his daughter, who stood him beside,
And who for all her learning was renowned,
He bade her tell him what it signified,
And she his dream began thus to expound.

"The tree," quoth she, "the gallows here doth mean,
And Jupiter betokeneth snow and rain,
And Phœbus, with his towel fair and clean,
Doth represent the bright sun's rays, 'tis plain;
Thou, father, shalt be hanged, 'tis clear, again,
The rain shall wash thee and the sun thee dry;"
Thus was he warned, by words full blunt and plain,
By his own daughter, who was called Phanýe.

Crœsus was hanged, this proud and wealthy king,
His royal throne could him in nought avail.
A tragedy nought else is but a thing,
By means of which in singing we bewail
The fact that Fortune always will assail,
With sudden stroke, the kingdoms of the proud;
For when men trust her most, then will she fail,
And cover her bright face as with a cloud.

THE

TALE OF THE NUN'S PRIEST.

THERE was a widow, much advanced in age,
And poor, once dwelling in a small cottáge,
Beside a grove, and standing in a dale.
This widow poor, of whom I tell my tale,
Since that same day when she was last a wife,
Had led in patience a full simple life,
For few her cattle were and small her rent;
By husbanding such things as God her sent,
She kept herself and eke her daughters two.
She three fat sows possessed, and had also
Three cows, and eke a sheep she calléd Mall;
Full sooty was her parlour and her hall,
In which she ate full many a slender meal.
Of piquant sauce she needed not a deal,
No dainty morsel passéd through her throat;
Her diet was according to her coat.
Repletion truly never made her sick,
And moderation was all her physíc,
With exercise and a contented heart.
Gout ne'er her dancing stopped, or made her smart,

No apoplexy ever hurt her head;
And never drank she wine, or white or red;
Her table most was served with white and black,
Milk and brown bread, of which she had no lack,
Singed bacon, and sometimes an egg fresh laid,
For she was as it were a dairymaid.
A yard she had, enclosèd all about
With sticks, and with a narrow ditch without,
In which she had a cock called Chanticleer,
That in the land of crowing had no peer.
His voice was merrier than the organ gay,
Which men on mass days in the churches play;
More certain was his crowing in his lodge,
Than is a clock or an abbáy horlóge.[1]
By instinct he knew each ascension
Of th' equinoctial in his native town;
For when fifteen degrees had once ascended,
Then crew he that it might not be amended.
His comb was redder than the fine corál,
And was embattled as a castle wall.
His bill was made of jet you might suppose,
Like azure were his legs and eke his toes;
His nails were whiter than the lily flow'r,
And like to burnished gold was his colóur.
This noble cock had under his control,
Of hens some seven to live with for his sole
Pleasure, as sisters and as paramours,
And wondrous like to him in their colóurs.
Of which the fairest feathered on her throat
Was known as the fair damsel Pertelote.

[1] Clock.

ourteous she was, discreet, and debonnaire,
And sociable, and bore herself so fair
Since that same day when she was seven nights old,
That truly she securely locked did hold
The heart of Chanticleer in every limb ;
He loved her so, therewith 'twas well with him.
But such a joy was it to hear them sing,
(When that the bright sun up began to spring,)
In sweet accord, " my love has gone away."
For at that time, I understand they say,
That beasts and birds knew how to sing and speak.
And thus one day, just as the dawn did break,
As this same Chanticleer and wives sat all
Upon their perches that were in the hall,
And next him sat the pretty Pertelote,
This Chanticleer loud groanéd in his throat,
As one who in his dreams is troubled sore.
And when this Pertelote thus heard him roar,
She was aghast, and said: " My husband dear,
What can you cause to groan, in this mannér?
You are a pretty sleeper, fy for shame ! "
And answering, he thus replied: " Madame,
I pray you now to lay aside your grief;
By God, I dreamed I'd come to great mischief
Right now, and still my heart is filled with fright.
Now God," quoth he, " my dream interpret right,[1]
And keep my body from a foul prisón.
" I dreamt how that I roaméd up and down
Within our yard, and that I saw a beast,
Just like a hound, which would have made a feast

[1] " Interpret favourably." " Let the issue be favourable."

Of me, and would have quickly had me dead.
His colour was betwixt yellow and red;
And tipped with black his tail was, and each ear,
Unlike the whole remainder of his hair;
His snout was small, his eyes so fiery,
That still for fear of him I almost die.
This caused me thus to groan, I must confess."
"Away," quoth she, "fie on your cowardice!
Alas!" she said, "for by the God above!
Now have you lost my heart and all my love.
I cannot love a coward, by my faith;
For certés, whate'er any woman saith,
We all desire, if only it may be,
To have a husband hardy, wise, and free,
And daring; not a niggard or a fool,
Or one that is a coward in his soul,
Or any boaster, by the God above!
How dare you tell for shame unto your love,
That you of anything could be afeard?
Have you no manly heart, with all your beard?
Alas! and can a dream you terrify?
There nothing is in dreams but vanity.
"Dreams are engendered by repletions,
And oft by gluttony, and by secretions,
Where humours are abundant in a wight.
This dream of yours, which you have dreamt to-night,
Is brought about by superfluity
Of your red cholera,[1] most certainly,
Which causeth folk to dream oft in their dreams,
Of arrows, and of fire with ruddy gleams,

[1] Caused by too much bile and blood (sometimes called red humour).—*Morris.*

Of great wild beasts, that would eat up them all,
Of contests, and of dogs both great and small;
Just as the sickness called insanity
Hath caused full many a man in sleep to cry,
For fear that bulls or bears all wild and black,
Or devils e'en should come him to attack.
Of other ailments could I tell also,
That cause to man in sleep full many a woe;
But here will say as little as I can.
"Lo, Cato, he who was so wise a man,
Said he not thus? 'Take notice ne'er of dreams.'
Now, Sir," quoth she, "when we fly from the beams,
Take, for God's love, some gentle laxative;
On peril of my soul and of my life,
I give the best advice and will tell no lie,
That both of choler and of melanchóly
You purge yourself; and that you may not tarry,
Though in the town there's no apothecáry,
I will myself two herbs describe to you,
Which would restore your health, if you them knew;
And in our yard the herbs then will I find,
With properties that are of such a kind,
That they will purge you down and eke above.
And now forget not this, for God's own love!
You have a choleric complexion;
Beware the sun in his ascension
Doth not you find replete with humours hot;
For if it do, I dare well lay a groat,
That you will have a fever tertian,
Or else an ague, that may be your bane.
A day or two you should have digestives
Of worms, ere that you take your laxatives

Of laurel, centaury, and fumetére,[1]
Or else of hellebore that groweth there,
Of catapuce, or of the dogwood berry,
Or herbs that grow in this our yard so merry;
Peck them up as they grow, and eat them in;
Be merry, husband, for your father's kin!
Dread never dreams; I can here say no more."
"Madame," quoth he, "gramercy for your lore.
But ne'ertheless as touching this Cato,
Whose wisdom and renown all men well know,
Although he ne'er had any dreams to dread,
By God, men may in ancient books well read
Of many a man, of more authority
Than ever Cato was, undoubtedly,
Who all the contrary hold, in this sense,
That they have found, in their experience,
That dreams are oft significations,
As well of joy, as tribulations,
Which folk endure in this our life present.
What needeth it to make an argument?
The proof of it has oft been shown indeed.
"One of the greatest authors,[2] that men read,
Saith thus: that formerly two fellows went
To make a pilgrimage with good intent;
And so it fell, they came into a town,
Where there was such a congregation

[1] Fumitory.

[2] Cicero, "De Divin.," L. i., c. 27, relates this and the following story, but with so many differences, that one might be led to suspect that he was here quoted at second-hand, if it were not usual with Chaucer, in these stories of familiar life, to throw in a number of natural circumstances, not to be found in his original authors. —*Tyrwhitt.*

Of people, and such want of room around,
That they not e'en one little cottage found,
In which they both of them might lodgéd be.
Wherefore they bound were of necessity,
At least for that night to part company;
And each of them went to his hostelry,
And took such lodging as to him should fall.
"The one of them was lodgéd in a stall,
Out in the yard, with oxen of the plough;
The other man was lodgéd well enough,
As he more luck, or greater fortune had,
That ruleth all, be it for good or bad.
"And so it fell, that, long ere it were day,
This man dreamt in his bed as there he lay,
How that his comrade did upon him call,
And say: 'Alas! for in an ox's stall
This night I shall be murdered where I lie.
Now help me, my dear brother, ere I die;
In all haste come,' he said, 'O brother dear!'
"This man up started from his sleep with fear;
But when from out his sleep he was awake,
He turned himself round, and no heed would take;
He thought his dream was nought but vanity.
The same thing twice, whilst sleeping, dreaméd he.
"And thus he thought, when he it dreamed again,
His comrade came and said: 'I am now slain;
Behold my bloody wounds both deep and wide!
Arise up early in the morning-tide,
And at the west gate of the town,' quoth he,
'A cart all full of dung there shalt thou see,
In which my body 's hidden privily;
Do stop this cart, I pray you, fearlessly.

My gold has caused my murder, it is true.'
And told him every point, how they him slew,
With a full piteous face all pale of hue.
And trust me, that this dream he found full true;
For in the morn, as soon as it was day,
Towards his comrade's inn he took his way;
And when he had arrivéd at the stall,
He for his comrade loud began to call.
"The innkeeper thus answered him anon,
And said to him: 'Your comrade, sir, has gone;
As soon as it was day he left the town.'
"This man then felt a great suspicion,
Remembering the dreams that he had dreamt,
And forth he went, all eager to attempt
To gain the west gate of the town, and found
A dung-cart as it went to dung the ground,
That looked in much the same condition
As he had heard the dead man mention;
And with a bold heart he began to cry:
'Vengeance and justice for this felony:
My comrade murdered was this very night,
And in this cart now lies gaping upright.[1]
I cry unto those officers,' quoth he,
'Who should protect and rule o'er this city;
Alas! alas! here lies my comrade slain!
What should I say to make this tale more plain?'
They overturned the cart upon the ground,
And in the middle of the dung they found
The dead man, who had murdered been all new;
O blesséd God, who art so just and true!

[1] Lying on his back with his mouth open. See "Knight's Tale," l. 1150.

Lo, how Thou murder dost make known alway!
Murder will out, so see we day by day.
Murder is loathsome and abominable
To God, who is so just and reasonable,
He will not suffer it concealed to be;
Though it may wait a year or two or three,
Murder will out 'tis my conclusion.
"And right anon the people of the town
The carter seized, and tortured him so sore,
And eke the innkeeper, of whom before
I spake, that they their wickedness confessed,
And they were hanged, as for them both was best.
"Here men may see that there are dreams to dread.
And sure it is, that in this book I read,
Right in the chapter that comes after this,
(I lie not, as I would have joy and bliss,)
Two men who would have passéd o'er the sea,
For certain reasons to a far country,
Had not the winds and weather been contráry,
Compelled were in a city both to tarry,
That stood full merry on the haven side.
But on a day, about the eventide,
The wind changed round just as for them was best.
Joyful and glad they went unto their rest,
And made arrangements for an early sail;
But of one man they tell this curious tale,
That in his sleep, as he there resting lay,
He dreamt a wondrous dream, ere broke the day.
He thought a man was standing him beside,
And him commanded that he there should bide,
And thus said: 'If thou dost to-morrow sail,
Thou shalt be drowned; thus ended is my tale.'

"He woke and told his comrade what he dreamt,
And urged him not his voyage to attempt,
On that day, but him prayed there to abide.
"His comrade who was lying him beside,
Began to laugh, and scorned at him full fast.
'No dream,' quoth he, 'could make me so aghast
As to delay to do a single thing.
I do not set a straw on your dreaming,
For dreams are only vanities and japes,
Men dream all day of owls or else of apes,
And eke of many a fancy therewithal;
Men dream of things that never were or shall
Be seen; but since thou wilt here thus abide,
And wilfully await another tide,
God knows, I pity you, and so good day.'
And thus he took his leave, and went his way.
"But ere that he the half his course had sailed,
I know not why, or what mischance it ailed,
But casually the vessel's bottom rent,
And ship and men under the water went,
In sight of other vessels them beside,
That had sailed with them by that very tide.
"And therefore, my fair Pertelote so stern,
By such examples old thou mayest learn,
That no man ever should with carelessness
Treat any dream, but rather should confess,
That many a dream may well you fill with dread.
"Lo, in the life of Saint Kenelm[1] I read,

[1] Kenelm succeeded his father Kenulph on the throne of the Mercians in 821, at the age of seven years, and was murdered by order of his aunt Quenedreda.—*Morris.*

(Who was Kenulphus' son, the noble King
Of Mercenrike,) how Kenelm dreamt a thing.
One day, a little ere he murdered was,
His death he in a dream saw come to pass.
His nurse in every part expounded clear
His dream, and bade him to take heed for fear
Of treason, but he was but seven years old,
And therefore he but little thought or told
Of any dreams, so holy was his heart.
By God, I with my shirt would rather part,
Than you should read this legend, as have I.
"Dame Pertelote, I tell you truthfully,
Macrobius,[1] who wrote the vision
In Africa of worthy Scipioun,[2]
Confirmeth dreams, and saith they oft may be
Warnings of things that men hereafter see.
"And furthermore I pray you to look well
In the Old Testament, at Daniel,
And see if he held dreams were vanity.
"Read eke of Joseph, and there shalt thou see
That dreams are sometimes (for I say not all)
Warnings of things, that shall in time befall.
"Look at the King of Egypt, Lord Pharaoh,
And at his baker and his butler too,
Were they not all affected by their dreams?
He who seeks facts from diverse realms, it seems,
May read of dreams full many a wondrous thing.
"Lo, Crœsus, who was once of Lydia king,
Dreamt he not that he sat upon a tree,
Which signified that he should hangéd be?

[1] Macrobius was the author of "Somnium Scipionis." [2] Scipio.

"Again Andromache,[1] great Hector's wife,
The day that Hector was to lose his life,
She dreamt upon the very night before,
How would be lost the life of her Hectór,
If that same day he to the battle went;
She warned him, but nought could avail anent
This thing, he ne'ertheless to fight would go,
And by Achilles was he slain, we know.

"But that same tale is all too long to tell,
And as it's day, I will not on it dwell.
Shortly I say here in conclusion,
That I shall have, touching this vision,
Adversity; and I say furthermore,
That on your laxatives I set no store,
For they are venomous, I know well, all;
I them defy, I love them not at all.

"Now let us speak of mirth, and stop all this,
Dame Pertelote, as I may hope for bliss,
Certes, one thing God has sent me of His grace,
That, when I see the beauty of your face,
You are so scarlet red about your eyes,
I may say truly, that my dread all dies,
For all so sure as *In principio,*
Mulier est hominis confusio.
(Madame, the meaning of this Latin is,
Woman is man's great joy and all his bliss.)

* * * *

I am so full of joy and of solace,

[1] Homer makes no mention of this dream. It is related in chap. xxiv. of "Dares Phrygius," and Chaucer very probably took it from him, or from Guido de Columnis.—*Tyrwhitt.*

That I defy all visions and all dreams."
And as he spake, he flew down from the beams,
For it was day, and so his hens did all;
And with a chuck he them began to call,
For he had found some corn there in the yard.
Royal he was, he was no more afeard.

* * * *

He looked as though he were a grim lion;
And on his toes he roaméd up and down,
And deignéd not to set his foot to ground.
He loudly chucked whene'er he corn had found,
And then around him quick his wives ran all.
Thus royal, as a prince is in his hall,
Leave I this Chanticleer with pride to swell;
And his adventure will hereafter tell.
When that same month, in which the world began,
That is called March, wherein God first made man,
Completed was, and passéd were also,
Since March commenced, some thirty days and two,
It fell that Chanticleer in all his pride,
With his seven wives all walking by his side,
Cast up his eyes towards the brilliant sun,
Which in the sign of Taurus then had run
Twenty degrees and one, and somewhat more;
He knew by instinct, and no other lore,
What time it was, and blissfully crew he;
"The sun," he said, "the heavens hath climbed, you see,
Forty degrees and one and more, as is
Plain, Madame Pertelote, my only bliss.

List to the happy birds, and how they sing,
And see the fresh bright flowers how up they spring;
Full is my heart of mirth and of soláce."
  But suddenly a sad thing came to pass.
Ever the latter end of joy is woe.
God knows, how quickly worldly joys oft go;
And if a writer would of this indite,
He in a chronicle might safely write,
That 'tis a thing which should remembered be.
  Now every wise man let him list to me;
This tale, it is as true, I undertake,
As is the book of Lancelot du Lake,
Which women hold in full great reverence.
Now will I turn to what I did commence.
  A crafty fox, full of iniquity,
That in the grove had dwelt for years nigh three,
As was predestined by the powers that be,
That night burst through the hedge audaciously
Into the yard, where Chanticleer the fair
Was wont, as eke his wives were, to repair;
And in a bed of worts all still he lay,
Till it was past the middle of the day,
Biding his time on Chanticleer to fall,
As gladly often do those murderers all,
When they in waiting lie to murder men.
  O base assassin lurking in thy den!
O new Iscariot, new Genelon!
O false dissembler, O thou Greek Sinon,
That broughtest Troy all utterly to sorrow!
O Chanticleer, accurséd be that morrow,
When thou into that yard flew from the beams!
For thou full well wert warnéd by thy dreams,

That that day would prove perilous to thee.
But what God destines must most surely be,
As is the opinion of full many a man.
Witness, as any learned student can,
How in the schools is great contention
In this matter, and great discussion,
And hath been ever since the world began.
But I could never beat out to the bran,[1]
As can the holy doctor Augustyn,
Boethius, and bishop Bradwardine,
Whether by God's worthy foreshadowing,
I of necessity must do a thing,
(By that I mean simple necessity;)
Or else if a free choice be granted me
To do that very thing or do it nought,
Though God predestined it, ere it was wrought;
Or if He me constraineth not at all,
But by necessity conditional.
I'll speak no more of any such affair;
My tale is of a cock, as ye shall hear,
That of his wife took counsel with much sorrow,
If he should in the yard walk on the morrow,
After the dream he dreamt which I have told.
Women's advice full oft is very cold;
Woman's advice first brought mankind to woe,
And Adam caused from paradise to go,
Where he had been full merry and at ease.
But as I well know whom it might displease,
If I the advice of women should condemn,
Pass on, for I but spake in jest of them.

[1] Sift the matter thoroughly.

Read authors where they treat of this more clear,
And what they say of women ye may hear.
These are the cock's own words, they are not mine;
Of woman I no evil could divine.
  There in the sand, bathing right merrily,
Lay Pertelote with all her sisters by,
As shone the sun; and Chanticleer so free
Sang merrier than the mermaid in the sea;
For Phisiologus[1] hath told us verily,
How mermaids often sing right well and merrily.
  And so it happened as he cast his eye
Among the worts upon a butterfly,
He saw the fox that there was lying low.
It little pleased him then to sing or crow,
But loud he cried, "cok, cok," and up did start,
As when a man is frightened in his heart.
For naturally a beast desires to flee
From an opponent if he may it see,
Though he before ne'er saw it with his eye.
  This Chanticleer, when he the fox did spy,
He would have fled, had not the fox said: "Ho,
My gentle sir, alas! where would you go?
Be you afraid of me, who am your friend?
Now, certés, I were worse e'en than a fiend,
If I would do you harm or villany.
I am not come in truth on you to spy,
But truly the sole cause of my coming
Was but to listen to you as you sing.
For true it is you sing as merrily,
As any angel that in heaven may be;

[1] An allusion to a book entitled "Physiologus de Naturis XII. Animalium," by Thetbaldus.—*Tyrwhitt.*

Beside you have of music more feeling,
Than had Boece,[1] or any who can sing.
My lord your father (God his soul now bless,)
And eke your mother in her gentleness,
Have both been in my house, to my great joy;
And pity 'twere, if I should you annoy.
But as men speak of singing, I you tell,
That, as I hope to use my two eyes well,
Save you, I never heard a man so sing,
As did your father on a bright morning.
Certés it was from out his heart he sung;
And in the attempt to make his voice more strong,
He would so strive, that oft with both his eyes
He was obliged to wink, so loud his cries,
And eke to stand on tiptoe therewithal,
And forth to stretch his neck so long and small.
Besides, he had so much discretion,
That there were none in any region,
Who him in song or wisdom could surpass.
I have read often in Burnell the ass,[2]
Amongst his poems,[3] how there lived a cock,
And how because a priest's son it did knock

[1] Boethius.

[2] Burnell is used as a nickname for the ass in the Chester Witsun Playes, MS. Harl. 2013. The original word was probably *Brunell*, from its brown colour; as the fox below is called *Russell*, from its red colour.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[3] The story alluded to is in a poem of Nigel Wireker, entitled "Burnellus seu Speculum Stultorum," written in the time of Richard I.—*Tyrwhitt.* The cock that used to crow and wake up the young man, purposely refrained from doing so on the morning that the young man was to be ordained, whereby he overslept himself.

Upon its leg, (when young and little wise,)
It made this priest's son lose his benefice.
But truly there is no comparison
Betwixt the wisdom and discretion
Of your good father, and his subtlety.
Now sing to us for holy charity,
Let's see, can you your father counterfeit?"
  This Chanticleer his wings began to beat,
As one who knoweth nought of treachery,
So was he ravished by this flattery.
  Alas! ye lords, full many a flatterer
Is in your courts, and many a false liar,
Who often pleaseth you more, by my faith,
Than doth he, who the truth unto you saith.
Ecclesiastes read on flattery;
Beware, ye lords, of all her treachery.
  This Chanticleer stood high upon his toes,
Stretching his neck out with his eyes shut close,
And loud began to crow then for the nonce;
Whereon Russell the fox jumped up at once,
And by the gullet seizéd Chanticleer,
And him toward the wood essayed to bear
Upon his back, for none yet did him see.
  O destiny, none can escape from thee!
Alas! that Chanticleer flew from the beams!
Alas! his wife would not believe in dreams!
And on a Friday fell all this distress.
  O Venus, who of pleasure art goddéss,
Since that thy servant was this Chanticleer,
And in thy service did his best, 'tis clear,
More for delight, than worlds to multiply,
Why didst thou suffer him that day to die?

Gaufred,[1] to rival thee 'twould be but vain
To try, who, when thy King Richard was slain
With cruel shot, didst mourn his death so sore.
O that I had thy learning and thy lore,
That I might chide the Friday, as did ye
(For in good truth on Friday[2] slain was he).
Then would I show you how I could lament
For Chanticleer, and all he underwent.
Certés such cries and lamentation
Were ne'er by ladies made, when Ilion
Was won, and Pirrus with his naked sword,
When he had seized King Priam by his broad
White beard, had slain him, (as saith Eneydos,)[3]
As made then all the hens there in the close,
When they saw what befell this Chanticleer.
But loudest shrieked dame Pertelote with fear,
Far louder than did Hasdrubal's young wife,
(When she was told that he had lost his life,
And that the Romans had destroyed Carthage,)
Who was so full of torment and of rage,
That wilfully into the fire she leapt,
And burnt herself, so stout a heart she kept.
O woeful hens, right so too criéd ye,
As, when Nero had burned the proud city
Of Rome, cried all the senators' sad wives,
Because their husbands had all lost their lives;

[1] He alludes to a passage in the "Nova Poetria" of Geoffrey de Vinsauf, published shortly after the death of Richard I.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Richard I. received his death wound on Friday, March 26th, 1199, but did not die until the 6th of April following.—*Morris.*

[3] Virgil.

For, without guilt, this Nero had them slain.
Now will I to my tale return again:
This simple widow and her daughters two
Had heard the hens all crying in their woe,
And out of doors off started they anon,
And saw the fox, who toward the grove was gone,
Bearing upon his back the cock away.
They cried aloud: "Out there! and well-a-day!
Ha, ha, the fox!" and after him they ran,
And eke with staves full many another man;
Ran Colle the dog, and Talbot, and Garland,
And Malkin, with her distaff in her hand;
Ran cow, and calf, and eke the very hogs,
So were they frightened by the barking dogs,
The shouting of the men and women eke,
They ran as if their very hearts would break.
They yelled as only fiends can down in hell;
The ducks cried, as they do, when men them kill,
The geese with fear flew high above the trees;
And from the hives came out a swarm of bees;
Such hideous noises, *benedicite!*
Certés that Jack Straw[1] and his company
Made never any that were half so shrill,
When they were any Fleming going to kill,
As on that day was made after this fox.
Of brass, they brought out trumpets, and of box,
Of horn, and eke of bone, in which they blew,
And therewithal they shouted loud and crew;
It seemed as if the very heavens would fall.
And now, good men, I pray you hearken all

[1] The noise made by the followers of this rebel, to which Chaucer here alludes, he had probably heard himself.—*Tyrwhitt.*

How often Fortune turneth suddenly
The hope and pride e'en of her enemy!
This cock that lay upon the renard's back,
In all his dread unto the fox he spake
And said thus: "Sir, if I were but as ye,
Then should I say, (and so may God help me)
Ye may return back home, ye proud churls all!
A very pestilence upon you fall!
Now am I come unto the woodland side,
And, do your worst, the cock shall there abide;
I will him eat in faith, and that anon."
The fox replied: "In faith it shall be done."
And as he spake those words, all suddenly
This cock broke from his mouth right cleverly,
And high upon a tree he flew anon.
And when the fox saw that the cock was gone,
"Alas!" quoth he, "O Chanticleer, alas!
I have to you," quoth he, "done a trespass,
In that I gave you cause to be afraid,
When I you seized, and from the yard you led;
But, sir, I did it with no ill intent;
Come down, and I will tell you what I meant.
I will tell you the truth, God help me so."
"Nay then," quoth he, "beshrew me if I do,
And may I now be cursed both blood and bones,
If thou beguilest me more oft than once.
Thou shalt no more with thy base flattery
Cause me to sing or wink e'en with mine eye.
For he that winketh, when he ought to see,
All wilfully, may he unlucky be!"
"Nay," quoth the fox, "may God heed not his prayers,
Who is so indiscreet in his affairs,

That he will talk, when he should hold his peace."
Lo, thus it is when we live at our ease,
And negligently trust on flattery.
But ye who hold this tale a great folly,
As of a fox or of a cock and hen,
Draw now a moral from it, my good men.
For Saint Paul saith, whate'er may written be,
Is written for our learning verily.
Take of the fruit and let the chaff be still.
And now good God, if that it be Thy will,
As saith my lord, so make us all good men;
And bring us to much happiness. Amen.

THE DOCTOR'S TALE.

THERE was, as tells us Titus Livius,[1]
A knight, who was yclept Virginius,
Filled full of honour and of worthiness,
And strong in friends, a man of great riches.
This knight a daughter had he by his wife.
No other child he had in all his life.
Fair was this maid, excelling in beauty
All other maidens that man e'er might see;
For nature had, with sovereign diligence,
Formed her with such surpassing excellence,
As though she would say: "See how I, Natúre,
Can paint, and form, and fashion a creatúre
Whene'er I wish; who can me counterfeit?
Pygmalion? no, though he aye forge or beat,
Paint or engrave: for here I say 'tis plain,
Apelles, Xeuxis would have worked in vain,
Or to engrave, or paint or forge or beat,
If they'd presumed e'er me to counterfeit.
For He who is o'er all the principal,
Hath made me His own vicar general,

[1] A native of Padua, celebrated for his writings, who died A.D. 17.

To form and paint whate'er on earth down here is,
Right as I wish, and each thing in my care is
Under the moon, that may or wane or wax.
And for my work right nothing will I axe;
My lord and I are quite of one accord.
I made her to the worship of my lord;
So do I ever with all my creatúres,
And that whate'er their colour or figúres."
Thus Nature, as it seems to me, would say.
This maid was fourteen years of age, and, aye,
In her, dame Nature took a great delight.
For just as she can paint a lily white,
And a rose red, right with the same paint, she
This noble creature painted had truly,
Ere she was born, upon her body free,
In all the colours just as they should be.
And Phœbus dyéd had her tresses great,
To match in colour his own streams of heat.
And if she thus excelled in her beautý,
A thousandfold more virtuous was she.
In her there lackéd no condition,
That could be praised, or to be prized was known.
In spirit, as in body, chaste was she:
And ever flourished in virginity,
With all humility and abstinence,
And with all soberness and patience,
And noble was in bearing and array.
Discreet she was in answering alway.
Though she were wise as Pallas, she would fain
E'er in her speech seem womanly and plain;
No flowery language or fine terms had she,
To seem wise; but, as one of her degree,

She spake, and all her words the more or less
Tended to virtue and to gentleness.
Modest she was with maiden's modesty,
Constant in heart, and ever busily
She strove to drive out idle indolence.
Bacchus had over her no influence,
For wine and sloth cause love but to increase,
As fires do on which men cast oil and grease.
She was so virtuous, that unconstrained,
That she were sick full often had she feigned,
So that she might avoid the company,
Where she was likely to meet with folly,
As at great feasts, at revels, and at dances,
Where gossip flows, whenever there the chance is.
'Tis such things that cause children oft to be
Precocious and bold, as men may see,
Which is full perilous, and was of yore
Thought so; for soon enough may she the lore
Of boldness learn, when she becomes a wife.
And all ye mistresses in your old life,
Who under your control lords' daughters have,
Be not displeaséd with my words, I crave;
Remember that control is given to you
O'er these lords' daughters, but for reasons two,
Either because ye've kept your honesty,
Or else because through weakness fallen have ye,
And thus know well enough the olden dance,
And have forsaken all such things perchance
For evermore; therefore, for goodness' sake,
To teach them virtue, see ye never slake.
A thief of venison, who his greediness
Renouncéd hath, and his old business,

Can guard a forest best of any man;
Now watch them well, for if ye will ye can.
Heed well, that ye unto no vice assent,
Lest ye be damned for such a base intent,
And whoso doth, a traitor is, 'tis true;
And heed take of what I shall say to you;
The foulest treachery in every sense
Is, when a wight betrayeth innocence.
Ye fathers, and ye mothers eke also,
When ye have children, be it one or two,
Of all their bringing up, yours is the sole
Charge, while they may be under your control.
Beware, lest by example in any thing,
Or by your negligence in chastening,
They shall all perish: for, I dare well say,
If they do, ye shall for it dearly pay.
Under a shepherd weak and negligent,
The wolf full many a sheep and lamb hath rent.
Be satisfied with this example here,
For I must turn again to my affair.
This maid, of whom I tell my tale express,
She kept herself, and needed no mistréss;
For in her way of living maids might read,
As in a book, every good word and deed
Belonging to a maiden virtuous:
She was so prudent and so bounteous.
For which the fame sprung up on every side,
Both of her beauty and her bounty wide:
And, through the land, they praiséd her each one,
Who lovéd virtue, save envy alonē,
Who sorry is at other's happiness,
And glad is at his sorrow and distress.

The doctor giveth this description.

This maiden one day went into the town
Toward a temple, with her mother dear,
As maidens in those days accustomed were.
Now was there then a justice in that town,
Who governor was of that region;
And so it fell, this judge his eyes he cast
Upon this thoughtful maiden, as she passed
Close by the place where this same justice stood:
Anon his heart was changéd and his mood,
So struck him had the beauty of this maid,
And to himself full privily he said:
"This maiden shall be mine for any man."
Anon the fiend into his body ran,
And taught him how he might by stratagem
This maiden to his purpose win from them,
Whose child she was; for well he knew, to force
Or bribery he could not have recourse,
For she was strong in friends, and also she
Confirméd was in such supreme bounty,
That well he knew he never could her win,
Or cause her with her body e'er to sin.
Wherefore, with great deliberation,
He for a churl sent, living in the town,
Whom he knew well was cunning and was bold.
This judge unto this churl his tale then told
Full secretly, and made him him assure,
That he would tell the same to no creature,
And added, if he did, he'd lose his head.
And, when assented had this cursed reed,
Glad was the justice, and made him great cheer,
And to him gave gifts precious and dear.

When planned was thus all their conspiracy
From point to point, as ye shall hear truly,

* * * *

Home went this churl, who named was Claudius.
This wicked judge, who was called Appius,
(Such was his name, for true it is and no fable,
But is historical as a thing notable;
The incidents are true without a doubt.)
This wicked judge he went now fast about,
His pleasure hastening in every way.
And so it fell, soon afterwards one day
This wicked judge, as we may learn from history,
As he was wont, was sitting in consistory,
And giving judgments upon many a case;
This wicked churl came running in apace,
And said: "My lord, if now it be your will,
Adjudge me right upon this piteous bill,
For which I would accuse Virginius.
And if this man shall say it is not thus,
I will it prove, and find a good witness,
That true is that which my bill doth express."
The judge replied: "Of this in his absénce
I may not give definitive senténce.
Let him be called, and I will gladly hear;
Thou shalt have right, and no wrong, as now, here."
Virginius came as was the judge's will,
And right anon was read this curséd bill,
The purport of it was as ye shall hear.
"To you, my lord Sir Appius so dear,
Sheweth your humble servant Claudius,
How that a knight ycleped Virginius,

Against the law, against all equity,
Holdeth, expressly 'gainst the will of me,
My servant, who my own slave is by right,
Who from my house was stolen on a night,
While she was yet full young, I will it prove
By witnesses if so it me behove.
She is no child of his, whate'er he say;
Wherefore to you, my lord the judge, I pray,
Yield me my slave, if thus it be your will."
Virginius turned to look upon this man;
But hastily, ere he his tale began,
(And well he would have proved, as should a knight,
And called as witnesses full many a wight,
How all was false, that his opponent swore,)
This curséd judge he would hear nothing more,
Nor e'en a word from this Virginius,
But gave his wicked judgment, and said thus:
"I order that this churl his slave may have.
Thou shalt no longer in thy house her save.
Go bring her forth, and put her in our ward.
The churl shall have his slave; thus I award."
And when this worthy knight Virginius,
By sentence of this justice Appius
Was thus compelled his daughter dear to give
Unto the judge, in wickedness to live,
He homeward went, and sat down in his hall,
And ordered them his daughter dear to call;
And with a face all pale as ashes cold,
He gazed upon her humble face, we're told,
With father's pity stabbing through his heart,
Though from his purpose he would ne'er depart.

"Daughter," quoth he, "Virginia by thy name,
There are but two things, either death or shame,
That thou must suffer. Ah! that I was born!
For ne'er didst thou deserve, I would be sworn,
To die or with the sword or with a knife.
O dearest daughter, comfort of my life,
Whom, with such pleasure, fostered up have I,
That thou wast ever in my memory.
O thou who art my last and bitter woe,
And in my life was my last joy also,
O gem of chastity, in patience
Take thou thy death, for this is my sentence;
For love, not hatred, thou must soon be dead,
I with my own hand must smite off thy head.
Alas! that Appius e'er did thee see!
Who hath to-day so falsely sentenced thee."
He told her all the case, as ye before
Have heard, it needeth not to tell it more.
"O mercy, dearest father," quoth this maid;
And, as she spake thus, both her arms she laid
About his neck, as she was wont to do,
(The bitter tears burst from her eyës two,)
And said: "O my good father, must I die?
Is there no grace? is there no remedy?"
"No, certés, dearest daughter mine," quoth he.
"Then give me leisure, father mine," quoth she,
"My sad death to lament a little space:
For, pardé, Jephtha gave his daughter grace
Thus to lament, ere he her slew, alas!
For God well knows, in nought did she trespass,
Save that she ran her father first to see,
And welcome him with great festivity."

And, with that word, she swooning fell anon,
And when at length the fainting fit was gone,
She rose again, and to her father said:
"Blesséd be God that I shall die a maid.
Give me my death, ere that I suffer shame.
Do with thy child thy will, in God's own name.
And, with that word, she prayéd him full oft
That he with his own sword would smite her soft;
And, with that word, again she swooning fell.
Her father, with a sorrowing heart and will,
Her head off smote, and seizing it forth went,
And to the wicked judge did it present,
As he still sat in judgment in consistory.
And when the judge it saw, (as telleth history,)
He bade men take him and him hang full fast;
But right anon a thousand folk aghast
Rushed in to save the knight, full of pitý,
For well known was the false iniquity.
They'd had anon suspicion in this thing,
By this churl's manner in his challenging,
That it was by the assent of Appius;
They all knew well that he was infamous.
For which unto this Appius they ran,
And in a prison cast this wicked man,
And there he slew himself; and Claudius,
Who servant was unto this Appius,
Was ordered to be hanged upon a tree;
But that Virginius out of pitý
So prayéd for him, that he was exiled,
And thus it fell that Fortune on him smiled:

The rest were hangéd all, both high and low,
Who ought about this cursedness did know.

* * * *

And thus I you advise this counsel take,
Forsake all sin ere sin shall you forsake.



THE PARDONER'S TALE.

In Flanders once there was a company
Of youthful folk who joined in such follý
As rioting and hazard at tavérns,
Where, with their harps, and lutes, and with gittérns,
They danced and played at dice, both day and night,
And ate as well, and drank with all their might,
And thus did to the devil sacrifice
Within that devil's house, in curséd wise,
By superfluity abominable ;
Their oaths so great were and so damnable,
That it was horrible to hear them swear ;

* * * *

And in came female dancers, many a one,
Well made and small, and fruit-sellers anon,
Singers with harps eke, and confectioners,
Who were the very devil's officers,
To kindle bright the fire of luxury,
That is alliéd unto gluttony;
The holy writ take I to bear witness,
That luxury 's in wine and drunkenness.

* * * *

Herod (as they may see who seek the tale,)
When he with wine replete was at his feast,
At his own table issued his behest
To slay Saint John the Baptist innocent.
And Seneca, without a doubt, well meant,
In saying he no difference could find
Betwixt a man who is out of his mind,
And one who may with wine all drunken be,
Except that madness, which in men we see,
Lasts longer than a fit of drunkenness.
O gluttony, all full of cursedness,
O thou first cause of our confusion,
And origin of our damnation,
Till Christ redeemed us with His blood again!
How dearly (here to put it short and plain)
Atoned for was that curséd villany;
Corrupt this world became through gluttony.
Adam our father and his wife also,
From Paradise to labour and to woe,
Were driven for that vice ('twas so indeed);
So long as Adam fasted, as I read,
He stayed in Paradise, and lo! when he
Ate of the fruit from the forbidden tree,
Anon he was cast out to woe and pain.
O gluttony, right well may we complain!
If man but knew how many a malady
Ensueth from excess and gluttony,
He would in his food be more moderate,
When at his table, and more temperate.
Alas! the short throat, and the tender mouth,
Causeth men East, and West, and North, and South,

In water, earth, and air to toil and sweat,
To get a glutton dainty drink and meat!
On this head, O Saint Paul,[1] well canst thou treat,
"Meat for the belly, and the belly eke for meat,
God shall destroy them both;" as Saint Paul saith.

* * * *

The Apostle weeping saith[2] full piteously:
"Full many walk, of whom you told have I,
I say it weeping now to ye who list,
They enemies are of the cross of Christ,
Whose end is death, whose belly is their god."

* * * *

How great the toil and cost is, thee to find!
These cooks, too, how they pound and strain and grind,
And change a substance to an accident,[3]
That greedy appetites may be content!
Out of the hard and hollow bones knock they
The marrow, for they nothing cast away,
That will go through the gullet pleasantly;
With leaf, and bark, and root, and spicery,
To make his sauce, it doth mankind delight,
To give him yet a keener appetite.

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[1] 1 Cor. vi. 13. [2] Phil. iii. 18.

[3] "Here Chaucer alludes to the disputes between the Realists and Nominalists. It would seem that the Realists maintained that everything possesses a substance, which is inherent in itself, and distinct from the *accidents* or outward phenomena which the thing presents. According to them the form, smell, taste, and colour of anything are merely *accidents* and might be changed without affecting the substance itself."—*Skeat.*

But certes he, who such pleasures practiseth,
Is dead, while in these vices he liveth.
A curséd thing is wine, and drunkenness
Is full of striving and of wretchedness.
O drunken man, disfigured is thy face,
Sour is thy breath, foul art thou to embrace,
And through thy drunken nose it soundeth aye,
As though thou ceasest not "Sampsóun" to say;
And yet, God knoweth, Samson drank no wine.
Thou fallest, as it were, a fat stuck swine,
Thy tongue is lost, and eke thy character;
For drunkenness is a true sepulture
Of all men's reason and discretion.
That man, in whom drink hath dominion,
Can keep no counsel, as is truly said.
Beware now of the white wine and the red,
And specially from that white wine of Lepe,[1]
That is for sale in Fish Street or in Cheap.
This wine of Spain creepeth with subtlety
Into those wines that growing are hard by,
From which ariseth such strong fumes truly,
That when a man of draughts hath drunken three,
And thinketh that he is at home in Cheap,
He is in Spain right at the town of Lepe,
Not at Rochelle, nor yet at Bordeaux town;
And then he will oft say, "Sampsóun, Sampsóun."

[1] Lepe was not from Cadiz. This wine, of whatever sort it may have been, was probably much stronger than the Gascon wines usually drunk in England. La Rochelle and Bordeaux, mentioned below, were both, in Chaucer's time, part of the English dominions. —*Tyrwhitt.*

But hearken, lords, to one word, I you pray,
How all the leading acts, I dare well say,
And victories, in the Old Testament,
Through very God who is omnipotent,
Were brought about by abstinence and prayer;
Look at the Bible, for you'll find it there.
See too how Attila, the conqueror,
Died in his sleep with shame and dishonóur,
Bleeding aye at his nose with drunkenness;
A captain should e'er live in soberness.
And o'er all this, consider ye right well
What was commanded unto Lamuel,
(Not Samuel, but Lamuel, say I,)
Read in the Bible[1] what is said clearly
Of wine drinking for them who give justíce;
No more of this, for it may well suffice.
And now since I have spoken of gluttony,
'Gainst gambling will I say a word truly.
Gambling 's the very mother of all lies,
And of deceit, and curséd villanies,
Manslaughter, blasphemy, and waste full sore
Of cattle and of time; and furthermore,
'Tis shameful and repugnant to honóur,
To be regarded as a hazarder.
And e'er the higher he is in estate,
So much the more men will him shun and hate.
If princes indulge in such practices,
For government or business purposes,
They are, by general opinion,
E'er held the less in reputation.

[1] Prov. xxxi. 4, 5.

Stilbon,[1] who was a wise ambassador,
Was sent to Corinth with full great honóur,
From Lacedæmon, to make an ally;
And when he came, it so befell truly,
That he the men at hazard playing found,
Who all were in that land the most renowned.
For which, as soon as ever it might be,
He stole back home again to his country,
And said he: "There will I not lose my name,
Nor will I give men cause me to defame,
For having made allies of hazarders.
Send ye some other wise ambassadors;
For, by my troth, now would I rather die,
Than I should e'er to gamblers you ally;
For ye, who are so glorious in honóurs,
Shall not alliance make with hazarders,
At least by my will or by my treaty."
This wise philosopher 'twas thus spake he.
Again, look how to King Demetrius,
The king of Parthes,[2] as old books tell us,
Sent once in scorn a pair of dice of gold,
Because he had at hazard played of old;
For which he held his glory and renown
Of no value or reputation.
Lords well may find some other kind of play
Honest enough to wile the day away.

[1] John of Salisbury, from whom Chaucer probably took this story and the following, calls him *Chilon*. Polycrat., L. i., c. 5: "Chilon Lacedæmonius, jugendæ societatis causâ missus Corinthum, duces et seniores populi ludentes invenit in aleâ. Infecto itaque negotio reversus est," etc.—*Tyrwhitt.*

[2] Parthia.

Now will I speak of oaths, both false and great,
A word or two, as old books of them treat.
Great swearing is a thing abominable,
And swearing falsely yet more censurable.
The God on high forbade swearing at all,
Witness in Matthew;[1] and in special,
Of swearing saith the holy Jeremy,[2]
"Thou shalt thine oaths say truly and not lie,
And swear with judgment and with righteousness;"
But idle swearing is a cursedness.
Behold and see in the first written table
Of mighty God's commandments honourable,
How that His second great commandment is,
"Take not My name in vain or eke amiss."

* * * *

And for the love of Christ, who for us died,
Leave off your oaths entirely, small and great.
Now, sirs, will I my tale to you relate.
These three young roysterers, of whom I tell,
Long ere prime[3] had been rung on any bell,
Were sitting in a tavern there to drink;
And as they sat they heard a hand-bell clink
Before a corpse, being carried to his grave;
And one of them called to his boy, "You knave,
Get out," quoth he, "and ask full hastily,
What corpse is this that but now passeth by,

[1] Matt. v. 34-37. [2] Jer. iv. 2.
[3] About nine o'clock, and here means the canonical hour for prayer so called, to announce which bells were rung.—*Skeat.*

And see that thou his name reportest well."
"Sir," quoth the boy, "I can to you it tell,
For 'twas me told ere ye came these two hours;
He was, pardé, an old ally of yours,
And he was slain all suddenly last night,
When drunk, as he sat on his bench upright.
There came a secret thief, whom men call Death,
Who in this country all the people slay'th,
And with his spear he smote his heart in two,
And thereon went his way without ado.
He hath a thousand slain, this pestilence;
And, master, ere you come to his presénce,
Methinketh that it were full necessary
To be aware of such an adversary.
Be ready, then, to meet him evermore.
Thus 'twas my dame me taught—I say no more."
"Now, by Saint Mary," said this taverner,
"The child speaks true; for Death hath slain this year,
Hence o'er a mile, within a great villáge,
Both man and woman, child, and hind, and page.
I trow his habitation is there;
He wisdom shows, who of him is aware,
Ere that he doth that man a dishonóur."
"By God on high!" then quoth this roysterer,
"Is it so dangerous with him to meet?
I will him seek by road, and eke by street,
I make a vow to God.
Now hearken, comrades, we three are as one;
Let each hold up his hand unto the other,
And each of us become the other's brother,
And we will slay this wicked traitor, Death.
He shall be slain, who others thus slayeth;

Pardé, it shall be done, ere it be night."
Together then these three their troths did plight,
To live and die each of them for the other,
As though he were by birth his own dear brother.
And up they started in their drunken rage,
And forth they went towards that same village,
Of which the taverner them told before,
And by full many a grisly oath they swore,

* * * *

"Death should be slain, if but they might him seize."
When they had gone not fully half a mile,
Right as they would have steppéd o'er a stile,
An agéd and a poor man did them meet.
This old man did full meekly thus them greet,
And say, "Now, lords, may God you save and see!"
A roysterer, the proudest of the three,
Him answered thus: "What! churl with sorry grace,
Why art thou all wrapped up except thy face?
Why livest thou to such a great old age?"
This old man 'gan to look in his visage,
And thus he said: "Because I cannot find
A man, not even if I walked to Ynde,[1]
In any city, or in a village,
Who would exchange his youth for my old age,
And therefore must I keep my old age still,
For such a length of time as is God's will.
No, death, alas! he will not have my life;
Thus walk I like a restless worn caitiff,
And on the ground, which is my mother's gate,
I knock e'er with my staff, early and late,

[1] India.

And say: 'My mother dear, O let me in!
Lo, how I waste in flesh and blood and skin!
Alas! when will my poor bones be at rest?
Mother, with you would I exchange my chest,
That in my chamber for so long hath been,
Yea, for a hairy shirt to wrap me in!'
But she will not as yet accord that grace,
And therefore pale and withered is my face.
"But, sirs, ye show but little courtesy,
To speak thus to an old man villany,
Save that he trespass may in word or deed.
"In Holy Writ[1] ye may yourselves well read,
'Before an old man hoary on his head,
Ye should arise.' Thus be admonished,
Do not, I pray you, to an old man now,
More harm than ye will men do unto you,
When old, if ye so long on earth abide;
And God be with you, may ye walk or ride.
I must go thither, where I have to go."
"Nay, thou old churl, by God, shalt not do so,"
This other gambler said to him anon:
"We do not part so lightly, by Saint John!
Thou didst but now speak of that traitor Death,
Who in this country all our friends slayeth.
Hear now my troth, as thou his spy art, say
Where he may be, or thou shalt for it pay,
By God and by the holy sacrament!
For truly thou wouldst willingly assent
To slay us youthful folk, thou wicked thief!"
"Now, sirs," replied he, "if ye would as lief

[1] Lev. xix. 32.

Meet with this Death, turn up this crooked way,
For in that grove he is, in truth I say,
Under a tree, and there he will abide;
And, boast ye as ye may, he will not hide.
See ye that oak? Right there ye shall him find.
God save you, who redeemed mankind,
And mend your ways!" Thus spake this poor old man.
And every one of these three roysterers ran
Till he came to that tree, and there they found
Of florins fine of gold all coinéd round,
Well-nigh in weight eight bushels, as they thought.
No longer then in truth for Death they sought,
But each of them so pleased was at the sight,
For all the florins were so fair and bright,
That down they sat them by this precious hoard.
The worst of them was first to speak a word.
"Brethren," quoth he, "take heed of what I say;
My wit is great, although I jest and play.
This treasure our good fortune to us gives,
In mirth and jollity to spend our lives,
And lightly as it came, so is it best,
For us to spend it all. Who could have guessed
To-day, that we should have so fair a grace?
But could this gold be carried from this place
Home either to my house or unto yours,
(For well ye know that all this gold is ours,)
Then should we be in great felicity.
But truly now, by day it cannot be;
Men would say that we were some robbers strong,
And for our treasure they would have us hung.
This treasure must be carried home by night
All secretly, and quick put out of sight.

Thus I advise that lots amongst us all
Be drawn, to see on whom the lot shall fall;
And he, who hath the lot, full joyfully
Shall run unto the town, and speedily
Bring bread and wine unto us privily.
And two of us [illegible] meanwhile carefully
This treasure [illegible], and if he doth not tarry,
When it is night, we will this treasure carry
By one assent, where'er we think it best."
The one of them the lots brought in his fist,
And bade them draw, and see where it would fall;
And it fell on the youngest of them all;
And forth toward the town he went anon.
And so it was, as soon as he was gone,
The one of them spake thus unto the other:
"Thou knowest well that thou art my sworn brother,
How thou may'st gain will I thee tell anon;
Thou knowest well our comrade now is gone;
And here is gold, and of it great plenty,
Which shall divided be amongst us three;
But ne'ertheless if I can manage so,
That it divided be amongst us two,
Shall I not do a friendly turn to thee?"
That other then replied: "How can that be?
He knoweth how the gold is with us two,
What shall we say to him, what shall we do?"
"Shall it be secret?" said the first man who
Had spoken, "and I'll tell thee in a few
Words, what we'll do, and bring it well about."
"I grant thee," quoth the other, "without doubt,
That, by my troth, I will not thee betray.'
"Now," quoth the first, "thou knowest well, I say,

That two of us shall stronger be than one.
Look when he sitteth down, and right anon
Arise, as though thou wouldest with him play;
And I will pierce his sides through, and him slay,
Whilst thou thus strugglest with him as in game,
And with thy dagger shalt thou do the same;
And then shall all this gold divided be,
My dearest friend, betwixt both you and me;
Then may we every wish of ours fulfil,
And play at dice right at our own free will."
And thus it was these two bad men to slay
The third agreed, as ye have heard me say.

The youngest, who had gone unto the town,
Full often in his mind turned up and down
The beauty of these florins new and bright.
"O Lord," quoth he, "if only but I might
Have all this treasure for myself alone,
There is no man, who liveth 'neath the throne
Of God, who would so merry live as I!"
Until at last the fiend, our enemy,
Put in his thoughts that he should poison buy,
With which he might his comrades cause to die.
Certés the fiend him found in such a plight,
That he had leave to do whate'er he might,
For this was utterly the knave's intent
To slay them both, and never to repent.
And forth he went, no longer would he tarry,
Into the town to an apothecáry,
And forthwith prayed him that he would him sell
Some poison, that would kill his rats right well;
And said there was a polecat in his yard,
That had his capons slain, and it was hard,

And fain he would avenge him, if he might,
On vermin that destroyed them in the night.
The apothecary answered: "Thou shalt have
A thing that, as my God my soul shall save,
In all this world there is no one creatúre,
That e'er shall eat or drink of this mixtúre
What would amount unto a grain of wheat,
Save that he shall anon his life forfeit;
Yea, die he shall, and in a lesser while
Than thou wilt take to slowly walk a mile;
This poison is so strong, pray understand."
This curséd man received then in his hand
This poison in a box, and quick he ran
Into the street hard by, unto a man,
And of him borrowed of large bottles three;
And in the two his poison pouréd he;
The third he kept for his own drink all clean,
For he to work hard all that night did mean,
In carrying the gold out of that place.
And when this roysterer, with sorry grace,
Had filled all full of wine his bottles three,
Unto his comrades quick repairéd he.
What need is there to speak about this more?
For right as they had planned his death before,
Right so they did him slay, and that anon.
And when this deed was done, thus spake the one:
"Now let us sit and drink and make us merry,
And afterwards we will his body bury."
And, with that word, by chance it came to pass,
He took the bottle where the poison was,
And drank, and gave his comrade drink also,
For which anon they died both of the two.

But, certés, I suppose that Avicen[1]
Ne'er wrote in any canon nor in fen,[2]
Of more amazing signs of poisoning,
Than these two wretches had in their dying.
Thus of these murderers there died the two,
And eke the wicked poisoner also.
O curséd sin, all full of cursedness!
O treacherous murder, O foul wickedness!
O gluttony, gambling, and luxury!
Thou blasphemer of Christ with villany,
And horrid oaths, from habit or from pride!
Alas! mankind, how doth it so betide,
That unto thy Creator, who thee wrought,
And with His precious blood thee dearly bought,
Thou art so false and so unkind, alas!
Now, good men, God forgive each his trespáss,
And 'gainst the sin of avarice you steel;
And may my holy pardon you all heal,
So that ye offer nobles or sterlíngs,[3]
Or else your silver brooches, spoons, or rings.
Bow down your heads before this holy Bull!
Come up, ye wives, and offer of your wool!
Your names I'll enter in my roll anon;
Into the bliss of heaven ye shall go soon.
I will absolve you, by the power I bear,
You, who will offer, clean and eke as clear,
As when you born were; and, sirs, thus I preach;
And Jesu Christ, who is our souls' best leech,
So grant you all His pardon to receive,
For that is best; I will not you deceive.

[1] Avicenna, an Arabian physician. [2] Old English for "section."
[3] Pence of sterling money.

But, sirs, one word forgot I you to tell,
I relics have and pardons too as well,
As fair as any man hath in England,
Which were all given me by the Pope's own hand.
If any now will, with devotion,
Offer and have my absolution,
Let him come forth and here anon kneel down,
And let him take full meekly my pardón:
Or, if ye wish, take pardons, as ye wend
Your ways, all new and fresh, at each mile's end,
So long as ye shall offer, e'er anew,
Nobles and pence, which shall be good and true.
An honour 'tis to all who may be here,
That ye can have a proper Pardoner
To give you absolution as ye ride,
In case of dangers which may ye betide.
'Tis possible there may fall one of you
Down from his horse, and break his neck in two.
Look what a safeguard it is to you all
That I into your fellowship did fall,
Who may absolve you all, both high and low,
Whene'er the soul shall from the body go.
I would advise our host here to begin,
For he the most enveloped is in sin.
Come forth, sir host, and offer first anon,
And thou shalt kiss the relics every one,
Yea, for a groat! Unbuckle now thy purse.

"Nay, nay," replied he, "or may God me curse,
It shall not be; thou wouldest make me kiss
(As I may live) some dirty old breeches,
And swear they were some relic of a saint!"

* * * *

This Pardoner, he answered ne'er a word;
So wrath he was, no word more would he say.
"Now," quoth our host, "I will no longer play
With thee or any other angry man."
But right anon the worthy knight began,
When he saw how the people were amused:
"No more, this man has been enough abused.
Sir Pardoner, be thou of merry cheer;
And thou, sir host, who art to me so dear,
I pray you that you kiss the Pardoner.
And Pardoner, I pray thee draw thee near,
And as we have done, let us laugh and play."
Anon they kissed and rode upon their way.

THE WIFE OF BATH'S TALE.

In ancient days, when lived the king Artóur,[1]
Whom Britons ever held in great honóur,
This land was wont with fairies to abound;
The Elf-queen, with her merry elves around,
Full often gambolled in the meadows green,
At least so was it thought of old, I ween;
I speak of many a hundred years ago;
But now can no man see e'en one or two,
For now, what with the charity, and prayers
Of begging priests, and other holy frères,
Who search out every land and every stream,
As thick as atoms in a sunbeam seem,
Blessing the halls, rooms, kitchens, and the bowers,
Cities and boroughs, castles high and towers,
The villages and barns, sheep pens and dairies,
Certes, has it come to pass that all the fairies
Have disappeared; for where once walked an elf,
There walketh now a begging priest himself,

[1] King Arthur.

At morn, at meal-times, and at eventide,
And matins saith, and other things beside,
While on his begging expedition.
Women may now go safely up and down,
For in no bush or under any tree
Is aught else ever to be seen but he,
And he will them to no dishonour bring.
And so befell it that Artóur the king
Had in his house a lusty bachelor,
Who, as he from the river rode one day,
A maiden chanced to meet, so bright and gay,

For which oppression was such clamour made,
And such a tale before King Artour laid,
That right anon this knight was doomed to die,
By law, and would have died most certainly,
('Tis probable such was the statute then,)
Had not the queen, and other ladies, when
They heard of it, so prayed the king for grace,
That he his life him granted in that place,
And gave him to the queen to do her will,
To choose if him she would or save or kill.
The queen then thanked the king with all her might;
And after that thus spake she to the knight,
As soon as she the chance had on that day.
"Thou art in such a plight," quoth she, "I say,
That for thy life thou hast no guarantee;
I grant thee life, if thou canst tell to me,
What thing it is that women most desire:
That is my will, and all that I require.

And if thou canst not tell it me anon,
Yet will I give thee leave to roam alone
A twelvemonth and a day, to seek and find
A fit and proper answer to our mind.
And surety will I have, ere thou a pace
Shalt move, that thou wilt yield thee in this place."
  Sad was the knight and grievously oppressed;
But what? He could not do what pleased him best.
And he at length consented forth to wend
His way, and come again at the year's end
With such reply, as should from God be sent:
He took his leave, and on his way he went.
  He sought at every house and every place,
To find this thing, and ever hoped for grace,
To learn what 'twas that women loved the most;
But ne'er was able, though he spared no cost,
To find, where'er he asked the question,
Two creatures of the same opinion.
  Some said that women love best wealthiness,
And some said honour, others prettiness,

* * * *

Some said we from our hearts most pleasure show,
When men or flatter us, or praise bestow.
He went full nigh the truth, I will not lie;
A man will win us best with flattery;
And with a close attendance and attention
Are we caught more or less, the truth to mention.
  And some said, that it could be seen with ease,
We would be free to do whate'er we please,
And would have man reprove us ne'er for vice,
But ever call us wise, and aught that 's nice.

For truly there no one is of us all,
If any man should in us stir the gall,
Who would not rage, howe'er he spake the truth;
Now try, and he will find it so who doth—
For be we ne'er so vicious within,
We would be aye *thought* wise and free from sin.
And some said, that a great delight have we,
When praised for firmness and for secrecy,
And when we're told that we e'er constant dwell,
And ne'er reveal what men may to us tell.
That tale's not worth the handle of a rake:
To keep a secret we small effort make,
As witness Midas; will ye hear the tale?
Ovid, who was 'gainst women wont to rail,
Said, Midas had beneath his lengthy hair,
On either side his head an ass's ear;
The which defect he hid, as best he might,
So cunningly from all his subjects' sight,
That, save his wife, no one the fact did know;
He loved her most and trusted her also;
He prayed her that unto no creature she
Should ever tell of his deformity.
She swore that she, not e'en the world to win,
Would ever do so great a wrong and sin,
And bring to disrepute her husband's name;
She would not tell a word for fear of shame.
But ne'ertheless she thought, that to have died,
Would have been better, than to have to hide
A secret long; so sore she felt at heart,
She found herself compelled with it to part;
And since she dared not tell it to a man,
Down to a marsh that was hard by she ran,

Till she came there, her heart was all a-fire;
And, as a bittern hummeth in the mire,
(As she her mouth down to the water laid,)
She murmured: "Let me never be betrayed,
Thou water, for to thee I tell alone,
My husband two long ass's ears doth own.
Now is my heart all whole, now is it out,
I could no longer keep it without doubt."
Here may ye see, though for a time we bide,
Yet it must out, we can no secret hide.
The remnant of this tale if ye would hear,
Ye must read Ovid, and may learn it there.
  This knight, of whom my tale is specially,
When he perceived he nought could learn truly,
(That is to say, what women loved the best)
Full troubled was the spirit in his breast.
But home he went, no time was left for learning,
The day was come that home he must be turning.
And on his way it was he chanced to ride,
O'erwhelmed with care, hard by a forest side,
Wherein he saw, all dancing on the sward,
Some four-and-twenty ladies, and toward
The merry dancers eagerly he turned,
In hopes that something might from them be learned;
But certain 'twas, ere he came fully there,
The dancers vanished all, he knew not where;
No creature saw he that bore any life,
Save sitting on the green he saw a wife,
A fouler hag no man could e'en conceive.
  To meet him she arose, ere he could leave,
And said: "Sir Knight, there is no path this way.
Tell me what 'tis thou seekest now, parfay;

'Tis possible it may the better be,
These olden folk know many things," quoth she.
" My dear kind mother," quoth this knight, "'tis plain
That I must die, if I cannot explain
What it is that doth women most delight.
Could you me tell, I would you well requite."
" Plight me thy troth here in my hand," quoth she,
" The very next thing I request of thee,
Thou wilt it do, if it be in thy might,
And I will tell you this ere it be night."
" Right here my troth," the knight replied, " I give."
" Then," quoth she, " I dare boast that thou shalt live ;
Thy life is safe, for I will stand thereby,
Upon my life this queen will say as I :
Let's see, which is the proudest of them all,
Who weareth either kerchief or a caul,
That dares say nay to that I shall you teach.
Let us go forth, and waste no time with speech."
Then whispered she a sentence in his ear,
And bade him to be glad and have no fear.
When they were come to Court, the knight averred
That he had kept his day, as well as word,
And ready was with answer, as he said.
Full many a noble wife and many a maid,
And many a widow, for their wisdom known,
(The queen as justice sitting on the throne,)
Assembled were that they this thing should hear,
And thereupon they bade the knight appear.
To everyone commanded was silénce,
And that the knight should tell in audience
What 'tis that worldly women love the best.
This knight he stood not still as doth a beast,

But to the question he anon answéred,
With such a voice, that all the Court it heard.
"My lady liege full generally," quoth he,
"What women most desire is sovereignty.
They wish to rule their husbands as their love,
And that they're mistresses in fact to prove.
This is your chief desire, though you me kill,
Do as you wish, I am here at your will."
In all the Court there was no wife, nor maid,
Nor widow, that disputed what he said,
But said he worthy was to have his life.
And at that word up started the old wife,
Whom this same knight saw sitting on the green.
"Mercy," quoth she, "my sovereign lady queen,
Ere that your court depart, now judge aright.
'Twas I who taught this answer to the knight,
For which he pledged his troth there in my hand,
The first thing that I should of him demand,
He would it do, if it lay in his might.
Before this court then pray I thee, Sir Knight,"
Quoth she, "that thou shalt take me for thy wife,
For well thou knowest I have saved thy life:
If I say false, upon thy oath say nay."
This knight replied: "Alas! and well-a-day!
I know right well that such was thy behest,
For goodness' sake pray make a new request;
Take all my goods and let my body go."
"Nay, then," quoth she, "beshrew me if I do.
For though I may be old and foul and poor,
Not e'en for all the metal or the ore
That's buried in the ground or lies above,
Would I renounce my claim to be thy love."

"My love," quoth he, "say rather my damnation.
Alas! I cry, that any of my nation
Should e'er so shockingly disparaged be."
But all for nought; the end was this, that he
Constrainéd was, if he would save his life,
To take this foul old beldam for his wife.
Now would some people peradventure say
That I am negligent, if 'tis my way
To tell nought of the joy and great array
Made at the feast upon that self-same day.
To whom, then, thus in short I answer shall,
I say there was no joy or feast at all,
But nought save heaviness and grievous sorrow;
For he, in truth, her wedded on the morrow,
And all day after hid him as an owl,
So sad he was to have a wife so foul.
Great was the woe the knight had in his thought,
When he his newly-wedded wife home brought;
At night he restless tosséd in his bed.
This hag lay smiling by his side, and said:
"O, my dear husband, *benedicite*,
Doth every knight thus treat his wife as ye?
* * * *
What is my guilt? For God's love tell it me,
And it shall be amended, if I may."
"Amended!" quoth the knight, "alas! nay, nay,
It ne'er can be, and 'tis the truth I tell,
Thou art so ugly, and so old as well,
Besides thou art sprung from so low a race,
There little wonder is I hide my face;
O would to God my heart would burst in twain."
"Is this," quoth she, "the cause of all your pain?"

"Yea, certainly," quoth he, "no wonder 'tis."
"Now, sir," quoth she, "I could amend all this,
If I should choose, and, ere three days pass by,
Cause you to treat me very differently.
"But if you speak of such a nobleness
As is descended from great wealthiness,
And say that therefore ye be gentlemen,
Such arrogance I hold not worth a hen.
"Look at that man, who virtuous alway,
In private and in public striveth aye,
To do whatever noble deeds he can,
And take him for the greatest gentleman.
"To Christ should we all look for nobleness,
Nought gain we from our ancestors' riches.
For though they give us all their heritage,
For which we claim to have high lineage,
Yet can they not bequeath, for anything,
To one of us their virtuous livíng,
That made them gentlemen, as well in fact
As name, and bade us imitate each act.

* * * *

"Seldom up riseth by the branches small
Prowess of man, for God of His goodnéss
Wills that we claim from Him our nobleness,
For from our elders we can nothing claim
But worldly things, which may us hurt and maim.
"And everyone knows this as well as I:
If nobleness were planted naturally,
In any lineage all down the line,
None then would fail or ever cease, in fine,
To act as gentlemen, and in such wise
They never would have any fault or vice.

"Take fire and bear it to the darkest house
Betwixt this and the mount of Caucasus,
And let men shut the door, and thence retire,
And notwithstanding still will burn the fire;
Just as if thousands were it to behold,
Its natural course the fire will ever hold,
(On peril of my life,) till it shall die.
"Here may ye see well how nobility
Is not annexéd to possession,
Since people act on every occasion,
As fire doth, following its natural bent;
For men will find, as if 'twas God's intent,
Lords' sons oft shameless, full of infamy.
He who would praised be for nobility,
Because he born was in a noble house,
And ancestors had noble and virtuous,
And will himself ne'er do a noble deed,
Nor follow his dead elders' noble lead,
He is not noble, be he duke or earl;
A vilain's sinful deeds but make a churl.
For nobleness is nought but the renown
Of ancestors, who were for bounty known,
Which is a thing detached from thy persón:
Thy nobleness doth come from God alone.
Thence cometh our true nobleness of grace,
It was no thing bequeathed us with our place.
"Think then how noble, as Valerius
Hath said, was Tullius Hostilius,
Who rose from poverty to nobleness.
Read Seneca, and read as well Boece,[1]

[1] Boethius.

There shall ye see expressed, how both agreed,
He noble is who doth a noble deed.
And therefore, husband dear, I thus conclude,
Albeit that my ancestors were rude,
Yet may the God above, and so hope I,
Now grant me grace to live e'er virtuously.
Then am I noble, when I shall begin
To live a virtuous life and cease to sin.

"Touching my poverty, which doth you grieve,
The God above, in Whom we both believe,
In poverty aye chose to lead His life;
And certés every man, and maid, and wife,
Can understand that Jesus, heaven's great King,
Would not have chosen thus a wicked thing.

"Glad poverty's an honest thing; I quote
What Seneca and other writers wrote.
Whoso with poverty ne'er feeleth hurt,
I hold him rich, e'en hath he not a shirt.
But he that coveteth is a poor man,
For he would have a thing he never can.
He that nought hath, nor coveteth to have,
Is rich, although ye hold him but a knave.
True poverty is no sin certainly.

"Juvenal of poverty saith merrily:
'The poor man, when he goeth by the way,
In presence e'en of thieves may sing and play.'
From poverty good cometh; and I guess
'Tis a relief oft in perplexities,
And bringeth wisdom, in its fullest sense,
To him who taketh it in patience;
And poverty, though strange it be confessed,
Is a possession that none will contest.

'Tis poverty full oft, when man is low,
That maketh him his God and self to know ;
It is a spectacle, it seems to me,
Through which he may true friends more clearly see.
And therefore, sir, since I desire your love,
Do not, I pray, my poverty reprove.
"Touching old age, which you reprove in me ;
And certés, sir, though no authority
Is in the books, ye guardians of honóur
Say that men ever should old men honóur,
And call them father, in your gentleness ;
And I could find authorities, I guess.

* * * *

"Select now one of these two things," she said,
"To have me foul and old till I be dead,
And be to you a true and humble wife,
And ne'er you to displease in my all life ;
Or else will you me have both young and fair,
And take your chance of any woe, whate'er
It may be, in your house because of me,
Or in some other place, it well may be?
Now choose the one to which you would be tied."
This knight reflected, and full sorely sighed,
But he at length replied in this mannér :
"My lady and my love and wife so dear,
To your wise judgment will I leave this thing :
Choose you yourself which may most pleasure bring
And honour unto you and me also ;
I say no word for either of the two,
For as you wisheth, it sufficeth me."
"Then have I got the mastery," quoth she,

"Certes, if to rule and govern is the test."
"Yea, wife, 'tis so," quoth he, "I hold it best."
"Kiss me," quoth she, "we are no longer wroth,
For by my troth I will be to you both,
That is to say, both fair and good; and I
Pray unto God that I insane may die,
If I to you be not as good and true,
As e'er a wife was since the world was new,
And I be not to-morrow fair and clean
As any lady, empress, or a queen,
That dwelleth 'twixt the east and eke the west;
Do with my life as seemeth to you best.
Cast up the curtain and see how it is."
And when the knight saw verily all this,
That she so fair was and so young as well,
For very joy into her arms he fell,
His happy heart bathed in a bath of bliss;
And many a hundred times he did her kiss.
And she obeyéd him in everything
That pleasure gave, or was to his likíng.
And thus they lived on unto their lives' end
In perfect happiness; and God us send
Meek and young husbands, willing to be led,
And grace that we may outlive those we wed.
And eke I pray God to cut short their lives,
Who never will be governed by their wives.

THE CLERK'S TALE.

Introduction.

THERE is upon the west of Italy,
Down at the foot of Vesulus[1] the cold,
A pleasant plain, food giving plenteously,
Where many a tower and town thou may'st behold,
Which built were in our fathers' days of old,
And many another sight for beauty famed;
Saluzzo is this noble country named.

A marquis once was lord of all that land,
As were his worthy elders him before,
And ready and obedient to his hand
Were all his subjects; and in great honór,
And in joy lived he in those days of yore,
Beloved and feared, as he through fortune found,
By all his lords and commoners around.

[1] Monte Viso.

Besides he was, to speak of lineage,
The noblest born of all in Lombardy,
A fair person, and strong, and young in age,
And full of honour and of courtesy;
Discreet enough to rule o'er his country,
Save in some things in which he was to blame,
And of this young lord, Walter was the name.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought
What in the time-to-come might him betide,
But of the present was his only thought,
How he might hawk or hunt on every side;
And he well nigh all other cares let slide,
And eke would not, and that was worst of all,
Wed any wife, for ought that might befall.

Only that point his people bore so sore,
That in a flock one day they to him went,
And one of them, the most experienced, or
The one who could best gain his lord's assent,
And so might tell him what the people meant,
Or else the best could put the matter clear,
He to the marquis spake, as ye shall hear.

"O noble Marquis, your humanity
Assureth us, imparting fearlessness,
Whene'er ariseth the necessity
That we to you must tell our heaviness;
Hear of what 'tis, lord, in your gentleness,
That we, with piteous heart, do all complain,
And do not now to hear my voice disdain.

"Although I have no more in this affair
To do than any other in this place,
Yet forasmuch as you, my lord so dear,
Have alway showed me favour and your grace,
I ask for, on behalf the populace,
An audience, to show you our request,
And you, my lord, will do what seemeth best.

"For certés, lord, so well we you admire,
And all your work, and ever have, that we
Can think of nothing, that we could desire,
To make us live in more felicity,
Save but one thing, if it perchance could be,
That you, lord, might a wedded man become,
Then would your people happy live at home.

"Bow down your neck beneath that blissful yoke
Of sovereignty, and not of base service,
Which men call either marriage or wedlock;
And think, my lord, amongst your thoughts full wise,
How swiftly pass our days in sundry wise;
For though we sleep, or wake, or roam, or ride,
Time flieth on, and will for none abide.

"And though your green youth is in flower as yet,
On alway creepeth age, still as a stone,
And death doth high and low take in his net,
And smiteth all, for there escapeth none;
And although certain, as we are each one,
That we must die, uncertain are we all
What day 'twill be, when death will on us fall.

"Believe then that it is our true intent,
Who never yet refuséd your behest,
And we will, lord, if only you assent,
Choose you a wife in a short time at least,
Born of the highest, noblest, and the best
In all this land, so that we thus may show
Honour to God and you in doing so.

"From this anxiety now free us all,
And take a wife to you, for goodness' sake,
For if, which God forbid, it so befall,
That death shall to your lineage some day make
An end, and strange successors come to take
Your heritage, O! sad will be our life!
Wherefore we pray you soon to choose a wife."

Their piteous faces and their humble prayer
Caused this good marquis to have great pitý.
"Ye will," quoth he, "my own dear people here,
In this constrain me in a manner I,
Ere this, ne'er thought of, who loved liberty,
Which is enjoyed but seldom when we wive;
Where I was free, I must in bondage live.

"But ne'ertheless I see your true intent,
And will in this put faith in what you say;
Wherefore I of my free will now assent
To wed me, and as soon as e'er I may.
But in so far as offered ye to-day
To choose a wife for me, I you release,
And hope all such proposals hence will cease.

"For God well knows, that children oft appear
Unlike their worthy elders, who before
Them lived, for goodness comes from God, 'tis clear,
Not from the stock which them produced or bore;
I trust in God's great goodness, and therefore
I will my marriage, and estate, and rest,
To Him commit, to do as He thinks best.

"Leave me alone in choosing of my wife,
That load upon my back I will endure;
But I you pray, and charge upon your life,
That whate'er wife I take, ye me assure,
That ye will all respect her least pleasure,
In word and deed, both here and everywhere,
Right as if she an Emperor's daughter were.

"And furthermore, this shall ye swear, that ye
Will neither murmur 'gainst my choice, nor strive;
For since I shall forego my liberty
At your request, as I may hope to thrive,
Where'er my heart is set, there will I wive;
And lest ye all will act in this mannér,
I pray you speak no more of this mattér."

With hearty will they swore, and gave assent
To all he asked, no man of them said nay;
Beseeching him of grace, ere that they went,
That he would name to them the earliest day
For his marriage, that in his pleasure lay;
For still the people felt a little dread,
That after all this marquis would not wed.

He named to them the day that pleased him best,
On which he would be married certainly,
And said he did it all at their request;
And they with humble mien subserviently,
And kneeling on their knees full reverently,
Then thanked him all, and thus was quickly ended
Their interview, and home their ways they wended.

And thereupon he to his officers
Commanded that a feast they should purvey,
And on his privy knights and followers
Duties imposed, as pleased him best to lay
On each, and they, as quickly to obey
His least commands, worked all with diligence,
To make the feast with great magnificence.

Part II.

Not very distant from that same palace,
Wherein this marquis planned thus his marriáge,
There stood a thorpe, and 'twas a pretty place,
In which the poorer folk of that villáge,
With all their beasts, dwelt, and by their tillage,
And, by their labour, gained their sustenance,
According as the earth gave them the chance.

Amongst these humble folk, there dwelt a man,
Who was considered poorest of them all;
(But God on high, whene'er He wisheth, can
His grace send e'en into the humblest stall;)
Janicula his comrades did him call.
A daughter had he, fair enough to see,
A young maid, and Griselda named was she.

But if we speak of virtuous beauty,
Then was she e'en the fairest 'neath the sun;
And as she had been reared in poverty,
No sinful lust its course had through her run.
More often from the well than from the tun
She drank, and never happy was unless
She'd work to do, and kept from idleness.

But though this maid was of a tender age,
Yet in the breast of her virginity,
There was enclosed much sober firm courage;
And with great reverence and charity,
She fostered her old father carefully;
Whilst spinning, in the field some sheep she kept,
And never idle seemed until she slept.

And when this maid came homeward, she would bring
Roots, herbs, and other vegetables oft,
Which she would slice and boil for her living,
And made her bed full hard and never soft;
And kept her father, and him tended oft
With watchful care, and eke with diligence,
As one who doth a father reverence.

Upon Griselda, this young creature, then,
Full oftentimes the marquis set his eye,
As he out hunting rode perchance, and when
It so befell that he her might espy,
'Twas not with wanton glance of mere folly,
That he regarded her, but truth to state,
He on her looks would sadly meditate.

Commending in his heart her womanhood,
And virtues eke, surpassing any wight
Of her own age, as well in deed as mood.
For though *the people* have no great insight
Respecting virtue, still *he* weighed aright
Her goodness, and determined that he would
Wed her alone, if wed at all he should.

The wedding-day drew nigh, but not a man
Could tell what woman was the wife to be,
And men to wonder and to talk began,
And said, whene'er they met in privacy:
"Will not our lord give up his vanity?
Will he not wed? Alas! alas! the while!
Why will he thus himself and us beguile?"

The marquis ne'ertheless caused men to make
Of gems set all in gold, and of azúre,
Brooches and rings for his Griselda's sake,
And of her clothing also took measúre,
By some young maid who was of like statúre,
And eke of other ornaments as well,
As were for such a wedding suitable.

The early forenoon of the very day
Approached, on which this wedding was to be;
And all the palace was in great array,
Both hall and chambers, each befittingly;
Filled were the offices full plenteously,
And there the daintiest food, too, men might see,
That could be found throughout all Italy.

This royal marquis brilliantly arrayed,
With lords and ladies in his company,
Whose presence at the wedding feast was prayed,
And with a retinue of youths, gaily,
And with the sound of diverse melody,
To that same thorpe, of which I ere now spake,
In this array his way began to make.

Griselda who, God knows, full innocent
Was, that for her was set out this array,
To fetch some water at a well forth went,
And home returned again without delay.
For she had heard it said, that on that day
The marquis would be wed, and of the sight
She fain would something see, if but she might.

She thought, "I will with other maidens stand,
Who are my friends, in our own door, and see
The marchioness," and thereupon she planned
To do at home, as quickly as might be,
The duties that belonged to her, for she
Said to herself, "Then at my leisure may
I see her to the castle pass this way."

And as she o'er her threshold would have gone,
This marquis came and her began to call;
And she set down her waterpot anon
Beside the threshold, just inside a stall,
And down upon her knees began to fall,
And with sad countenance remained she still,
Till she had heard what was the great lord's will.

This thoughtful marquis spake unto the maid
Full soberly, and thus he did begin:
"Where is your father now, Griseld?" he said,
And she with reverence and humble mien,
Answered, "My lord, my father is within."
And in she went, and further spake she nought,
But to the marquis she her father brought.

He by the hand then took the poor old man,
And thus he spake, when he him had aside,
"Janicula, I neither may nor can
For longer of my heart the pleasure hide.
If thou wilt it vouchsafe, whate'er betide,
Thy daughter will I take, ere that I wend
My way hence, for my wife till her life's end.

"Thou lovest me, and art, I feel certáin,
As true a liege as woman ever bore,
And all that pleaseth me, I think, 'tis plain,
Will please thee also, and tell me therefore
Upon this point, on which I spake before,
If thou to my proposal wilt incline,
To take me for thy son-in-law, in fine?"

This suddeń offer did so much astound
This man, that red he turned, and all quakíng
He stood; and scarce a word to speak he found,
Save only thus: "Lord," quoth he, "my will in
This thing is as your will, 'gainst your likíng
I wish for nought; you are my lord so dear,
Right as you please do now in this affair."

"My will 'tis," quoth the marquis courteously,
"That, in thy chamber, I, and thou, and she
Shall meet together, and dost thou know why?
For I will ask her, if it her will be,
To be my wife, and alway ruled by me;
And in thy presence shall all this be done,
For I will nothing say to her alone."

And while within the room they were about
Their treaty, which was as ye soon shall hear,
The people stood around the house without,
And wondered at the manner, and the care,
And heed, with which she kept her father dear.
And wonder well this poor Griselda might,
For ne'er had she till then seen such a sight.

No marvel, too, that she astonished was
To see so great a guest there, for 'tis true
That no such thing till then had come to pass,
And therefore was her face all pale of hue.
But shortly here this tale now to pursue,
These are the words which this good marquis said
To this benign and very faithful maid:

"Griselda," said he, "you must understand
It is your father's wish and mine truly,
That I you wed, and eke it doth so stand
As I suppose, that you wish it to be.
But I would ask these questions first," quoth he,
"That since it must full hastily be done,
Will you assent, or think it o'er alone?

"I say this, are you ready with good heart
To let me alway freely have my way,
As I think best, and should you laugh or smart,
To murmur ne'er against me night nor day?
And eke, when I say 'yea,' to say not 'nay,'
Neither by word nor frowning face; for true
It is, swear this, and I will marry you."

Amazed at these same words, and filled with dread,
This maiden answered him, "Lord, unworthy
Am I of th' honour thus so high to wed;
But as you wish this thing, right so will I;
And here I swear that never willingly,
In deed or thought will I cease serving you,
If die I must, which I were loath to do."

"That is enough, Griselda mine," quoth he.
And forth he quickly went, all full of cheer,
Out at the door, and thereupon when she
Had followed him, thus to the people near
He spake: "This is my wife, who standeth here;
Now honour her, and love her too, I pray,
Who loveth me; there is no more to say."

And that this lowly maid should nothing bring
Into his house of her old clothes, he bade
The women to take from her everything;
And these same ladies were not all right glad
To touch the clothes in which the maid was clad.
But ne'ertheless they had to clothe anew,
From head to foot, this maiden bright of hue.

Her hair they combed, which all entangled lay
Untidily, and with their fingers small
Made for her head a nuptial garland gay,
And covered her with jewels great and small.
Of her array why should I tell you all?
They scarcely knew her for her beauty rare,
When she was dressed afresh in robes so fair.

This marquis next, espoused her with a ring
Brought for that purpose, and he then her set
Upon a horse, a snow-white ambling thing,
And to his palace, without further let,
With joyful people who her led and met,
Conveyed her straight, and thus the day did spend
In revel, till the sun 'gan to descend.

And shortly here this tale now to pursue,
To this new marchioness, I say truly,
That God did of His grace such favour show,
That it seemed past all possibility,
That she had been born in rusticity,
But rather than in cottage or in stall,
She had been brought up in an emperor's hall.

To every one she soon became so dear
And honoured, that they, who, in days of yore,
Had from her birth her known from year to year,
Scarce could believe their eyes; indeed, some swore
That to Janicula, of whom before
I spake, she was no daughter, for they thought,
She was some maid of whom they all knew nought.

For although ever virtuous was she,
She soon reached such a pitch of excellence,
In goodness and in every quality,
And so discreet was, and for eloquence
So famed, and worthy was of deference,
And could her people's hearts so well embrace,
That all her loved who looked upon her face.

Not only of Saluzzo in the town
Was spread abroad the goodness of her name,
But eke besides in many a region,
If one spake well, another said the same;
So spread of her benevolence the fame,
That men and women, as well young as old,
Oft to Saluzzo went, her to behold.

Thus Walter lowly, nay but royally,
Wedded most happily with honesty,
Lived on in peace, ease, and prosperity
At home, and of God's grace enough had he;
And since he said that 'neath a low degree
Virtue was often hid, the people held him
A prudent man, and that is seen full seldom.

Not only this Griselda by her wit
Knew every act of wifelike homeliness,
But she whene'er the case required of it,
For benefit of all, wrongs would redress.
There was no discord, ill-will, nor distress
In all that land, which she could not appease,
And wisely brought them all to rest and ease.

And though her husband left her for a while,
If gentlefolk or men of her country
Were wroth, she quickly would them reconcile;
Such store of wise and ready words had she,
And judgments gave so full of equity,
That she from heaven was sent, men did believe,
That she might save them and their wants relieve.

In some months after Griseld, full of joy,
Had been thus married, she a daughter bore;
Although she would have rather had a boy,
Glad was the marquis and the folk therefore;

* * * *

Part III.

It so befell, as it doth oft, I ween,
When this child had, but for a little spell,
Been at the breast, this marquis longed so keen
To tempt his wife, and test her firmness well,
That he could not out of his heart repel
This marvellous desire, to try her love,
Needless, God knows, he thought the attempt would prove.

He had her tried full oft enough before,
And found her ever good; what needed it
For him to tempt her alway more and more?
Though some men praise it for a subtle wit,
I say, he is to have a wife unfit,
Who trieth her whene'er there is no need,
And putteth her to anguish by such deed.

This marquis went to work then in this manner,
He came alone one night there where she lay,
And with a stern and gloomy face began her
Thus to address: "Griselda, that same day
That I you raised out of your poor array,
And gave you high estate and nobleness,
You have not that forgotten, as I guess.

"I say, Griselda, that this dignity,
To which I have you lately raised, I trow,
Doth never you forgetful cause to be,
That I you took from poor estate, full low
For any weal that you yourself might know.
Take heed of every word I say to you,
There is no one to hear me, but we two.

"You know full well how you yourself came here
Into this house, it is not long ago,
And though to me you be both good and dear,
I hear that to my nobles 'tis not so;
They say it is to them a shame and woe,
To be the subjects and the servants all
Of thee,[1] who wast born in a village small.

"And specially, now since a daughter thou
Hast borne, these words do but in truth increase,
But I desire, as I have done till now,
To live my life with them in rest and peace;
I cannot in this case do as I please;
I must act with thy daughter for the best,
Not as I would, nor let the matter rest.

[1] Mr. Skeat thinks that Walter makes use of the "thee" here and the "thy" in the following stanza, as a purposely slighting expression.

"Yet this, God knows, distasteful is to me;
But ne'ertheless, without your cognisance,
I will do nothing; but I wish," quoth he,
"That you in this prove your obedience;
Show in your deeds a little patience,
As you me pledged and swore in your village,
The day we celebrated our marriage."

When she had heard this, he no change perceived
Or in her voice, or mood, or countenance,
For, as it seemed, she was in nought aggrieved.
She said: "Lord, I put faith in your prudence;
My child and I, with full obedience,
Belong to you, and you may save or kill
What is your own, according to your will.

"There can be nought, as God my soul shall save,
Which pleaseth you and which displeaseth me;
Nought in this world do I now wish to have,
Nor dread to lose, save only you truly;
This is my heart's desire, and aye shall be.
No length of time, nor death can this efface,
Nor ever shall my love for you displace."

Glad was this marquis when she answered thus,
But yet he feigned as if it were not so,
And sad he looked, to further his purpose,
When he then from her chamber had to go.
Soon after this, within an hour or two,
He secretly revealed all his intent
Unto a man, and to his wife him sent.

Some sort of officer he was, this man,
Whom often faithful, this same marquis had
Found in great things, and eke such folk well can
Things execute, e'en when they may be bad.
This lord knew well that he him loved and had
In dread, and when this man his lord's will heard,
Into the room he went without a word.

"Madame," he said, "you must forgive me now,
Though I do that to which men me constrain;
You are so wise, that you full well will know,
Our lord's commands, although they cause us pain,
Must be performed, and though men may complain,
They still must needs his wishes all obey,
And so will I; there is no more to say.

This child I am commanded now to take."
He seized the child for whom he had been sent,
And by his face strove cruelly to make
Believe, that he would slay it ere he went.
Griselda, forced to suffer and consent,
Sat as a lamb, all meek, and mild, and still,
And let this cruel man thus do his will.

False was the reputation of this man,
And false his face, and false his word also,
Suspicious, too, the time he this began.
Alas! her daughter, whom she lovéd so,
She thought he would have slain it, in her woe;
But ne'ertheless she neither sighed nor wept,
Thinking she should her husband's will accept.

But she full sad, at length, to speak began,
And of the officer she meekly prayed,
That, as he was a worthy gentleman,
She might just kiss her child, ere it was dead;
And in her lap the little child she laid
With sad face, and with motherly caress,
She lulled it, and it then began to bless.

And thus it was she spake with tender voice:
"Farewell, my child; I shall thee never see;
But since I have thee markéd with the cross
Of Him, who, on a cross made from a tree,
Died for us all, blessed surely must thou be.
Thy soul, my little child, to Him I give,
For thou to-night for me must cease to live."

I trow that to a nurse, in such a case,
It would have seeméd hard this sight to see;
Well might a mother then cry out, "Alas!"
But though she felt full sad, so firm was she,
That she endured all her adversity,
And meekly to the officer she said:
"Take back again your little youthful maid."

"Go now," quoth she, "and do my lord's behest,
But one thing will I pray you of your grace,
(Unless my lord forbade you,) that at least
You will the body bury in some place,
So that nor beasts nor birds may it deface."
But he no word would to that purpose say,
But took the child and went upon his way.

This officer came to his lord again,
And how Griselda spake and did appear,
From point to point he told him short and plain,
And him presented with his daughter dear.
This lord a little pity felt, 'twas clear,
But ne'ertheless held to his purpose aye,
As lords will do, when they will have their way.

He bade his officer full privily
That he this child should softly bind and wrap
With every proper care and tenderly,
And take it in a box or in a wrap;
But threatened him with death, if it should hap,
That any man should know of his intent,
Or whence he came, or when or where he went;

But to Bologna, to his sister dear,
Who at that time of Panik was countéss,
He should it take, and make the matter clear,
And ask her it to make her business,
This child to foster with all gentleness;
And ordered him, as well, to bid her hide
Whose child it was, whatever might betide.

The man departed and thus did this thing;
But to the marquis now again will we
Return. He went about imagining
That by his wife's demeanour he might see,
Or by her words perchance perceive, that she
Were changed; but truly he her ne'er could find,
Save as she had been alway, sad and kind.

As glad, as humble, as eager him to serve,
And in her love, as she was wont to be,
He could in nothing any change observe;
Nor of her daughter e'er a word spoke she.
No sign respecting her adversity
Was seen in her, nor of her daughter spoke
She any word in earnest or in joke.

Part IV.

As time went on, there passed of years nigh four,
Ere she with child was; when God her consoled,
And she a male child to this Walter bore,
A noble boy, who fair was to behold.
And when the folk it to his father told,
Not only he, but all his country, raised
To God their voices, and Him thanked and praised.

When it was two years old, and to the breast
No longer looked for nourishment, they say,
This marquis yet again became possessed
With a desire to tempt his wife one day.
'Twas needless her to tempt in such a way!
But wedded men ne'er know how to forbear,
When they a patient wife find anywhere.

"Wife," quoth the marquis, "you have heard before
How ill the people do our marriage bear,
And specially since that a son you bore,
Now is it even worse than once it were.
These murmurs slay me, and I die with fear;
And with their voices do my ears so smart,
That they well nigh destroyéd have my heart.

"Now say they thus: 'When Walter shall have gone,
Then will Janicula's low race succeed,
And be our lords, for others have we none.'
Such were the words my people spoke indeed,
Well ought I of such rumours to take heed;
For certainly such murmuring I dread,
Though in my hearing they spoke not indeed.

"I would in peace live, if indeed I might;
Wherefore I am disposéd utterly,
Just as I once his sister served by night,
To serve him in the same way privily;
Thus do I warn you, lest you suddenly
Outrageous should become for very woe;
Be patient now, for this I pray of you."

"I have," quoth she, "said thus, and ever shall,
I wish for nought, and nought desire, 'tis plain,
But what you wish; nor should I grieve at all,
Though both my daughter and my son were slain,
If 'twas at your command, nor should complain.
I have but little share had in the twain,
Save sickness first, and then much woe and pain.

"You are our lord, do now in everything
Just as you wish; ask no advice from me.
For as I left at home all my clothíng,
When I first came to you, e'en so," quoth she,
"Left I my will and all my liberty,
And took your clothing; wherefore I you pray,
Do as you please, I will your wish obey.

"And truly if I had but prescience,
Your will to know, ere you your wish me told,
I would it do, and without negligence;
But now I know your will, and what you would,
To please you e'er, myself I ready hold;
For if I thought my death would bring you ease,
Right gladly would I die, you thus to please.

"Death's pains can never be compared, 'tis true,
Unto the pleasure of your love." And when
He saw her constancy, he cast his two
Eyes down, and wondered how she all her pain
In patience suffered, and would ne'er complain.
And forth he went with countenance full sad,
But in his heart he really felt right glad.

This ugly officer, in that same way
That he her daughter carried off, so he
(Or worse, if that were possible to say,)
Away her son took, who was fair to see;
And, as before, so patient still was she,
Her face no trace showed of her heaviness,
She kissed her son, and it began to bless;

And then she prayed this man that, if he might,
Her little son he would place in a grave,
And thus from birds, and beasts that prowl by night,
His tender limbs, so delicate, would save.
But she no answer was allowed to have.
He went his way, as if he cared for nought;
But to Bologna tenderly it brought.

This marquis wondered ever more and more
At her amazing patience, and if he
Had not with certainty well known before,
How she loved both her children perfectly,
He would have thought that 'twas undoubtedly
Either through malice or for some design,
That she this suffered, with so sad a mien.

But well he knew that, next himself, 'twas plain
She loved in every way her children best;
But I this question would of women fain
Ask: should he not have let the matter rest?
What more could a stern husband do to test,
Or prove her womanhood and constancy?
Yet he continued his austerity.

But there be folk of such condition
That, when a thing into their heads they take,
They never give up their intention,
But just as if they bound were to a stake,
They will their first loved purpose ne'er forsake.
Just so the marquis foolishly proposed
To tempt his wife, as he was first disposed.

He waited, if he by her countenance
Or word, could note a change in her courage.
But never found he any variance;
She was the same in heart and in visage;
And, aye, the older that she grew in age,
The more true she became, if that were possible,
In love, and he to find a change ne'er was able.

And thus it seemed, that there was of the two
But one will; for when Walter once expressed
His will, the same her pleasure was also;
And God be thanked, all happened for the best.
She well knew that for worldly peace and rest,
A wife for herself ne'er in practice should
Wish ought, but only as her husband would.

Of Walter soon the slander wide was spread,
That he with cruel heart most wickedly,
Because he a poor woman wedded had,
Had murdered both his children secretly.
Such murmurs rose, too, not uncommonly.
No wonder 'twas, for to the people's ear
There came no word, save that they murdered were.

And thus it was, that whereas they before
Had loved him well, the slanderous report
Caused all the people soon to hate him, for
To be a murderer is hateful thought.
But ne'ertheless in earnest or in sport,
He never from his purpose would relent;
To tempt his wife again was his intent.

When his first child had been ten years from home,
He, messengers informed in subtle wise
Of all his will, sent to the court of Rome,
Commanding them that they bulls should devise,
As for his cruel purpose might suffice,
In which the Pope, as for the people's good,
Should bid him wed again, if so he would.

I say he ordered them to counterfeit
The Pope's own bulls, and to make mention,
That he had leave his present wife to quit,
And had the Pope's full dispensation,
To stop ill-feeling and dissension
Betwixt his people and himself; the bull
Contained all this, which published was in full.

The common people, it no wonder is,
Imagined well that it had been right so;
But when news to Griselda came of this,
I fear me that her heart was full of woe.
But she, though sad, and ever would be so,
Disposéd was, this humble good creature,
The adversities of fortune to endure.

Awaiting e'er his will and his pleasure,
To whom she had herself given, heart and all,
As was but right, whilst her life should endure;
But shortly if this tale to you I shall
Relate, this marquis wrote a special
Epistle, showing fully his intent,
And to Bologna secretly it sent.

And he besought the Earl of Panik, who
Was wedded to his sister, specially
To bring back home again his children two,
With all befitting honour, openly.
But one thing he besought him anxiously,
That he to none, though men might wish to hear,
Should tell their names, or whose children they were,

But that the maid anon would wedded be
Unto Saluzzo's marquis, he should say.
And as this earl was prayed, right so did he;
For at daybreak he set off on his way
Toward Saluzzo, and in rich array
Went many a lord with him, this maid to guide;
Her youthful brother riding by her side.

Arrayed for an illustrious marriáge
Was this bright maiden, decked with gems full clear;
Her brother too, who seven years was of age,
Was gaily dressed, and happy did appear.
And with high honour, and with right good cheer,
Toward Saluzzo shaping their journey,
From day to day they rode upon their way.

Part V.

And with all this, after his wicked way,
This marquis yet to tempt his wife once more,
And eke to test, by every proof that lay
Within his power, th' obedience she swore,
To see if she were constant as before,
He on a day in open audience,
Full brutally spake to her this sentence.

"Certés, Griselda, 'twas enough for me
To have you as my wife for your goodness,
And your obedience and fidelity,
Not for your lineage or wealthiness;
But now I must in very truth confess,
That in high rank, as doth full oft appear,
We find great servitude and many a care.

"I may not do as every ploughman may;
My people all me now constrain to take
Another wife, and cry out day by day;
And eke the Pope, less ill will thus to make,
Consents to that which I dare undertake;
And therefore thus much truly now I say,
Another wife for me is on her way.

"Be strong of heart, and give up now your place,
And that same dower the which you brought to me,
Take it again, I grant it of my grace;
Return you to your father's house," quoth he,
"No man may alway have prosperity;
Bear in your heart, with equanimity,
The stroke of fortune or of destiny."

And she him answered with much patience:
"My lord," quoth she, "I know and knew alway,
How that betwixt your great magnificence
And poverty like mine, no person may
Draw a comparison; none can say nay.
I was unworthy, as I oft have said,
To be your wife or e'en your chambermaid.

"And in this house, where you me lady made,
(The God above I take for my witness,
And all so surely will He make me glad,)
I ne'er held myself lady nor mistress,
But humble servant to your worthiness;
And eke to serve thee, whilst I yet may live,
Above all worldly creatures, will I strive.

"That you so long, of your benignity,
Have held me in high honour night and day,
Whereas I was not worthy so to be,
For that I thank both God and you, and pray
That He will you requite; and now I say,
Unto my father I my way will wend,
And with him dwell until my life shall end.

* * * *

"And with your new-found wife, God of His grace
So grant you welfare and prosperity;
For I will gladly yield to her my place,
In which so blissful I was wont to be.
For since it pleaseth you, my lord," quoth she,
"Who once unto my heart brought rest and ease,
That I shall go, I will go when you please.

"But whereas you me offer now to take
The dower I brought, I bear it well in mind,
It were my wretched clothes, which would not make
Much show, and would be hard for me to find.
Good God! to think how gentle and how kind
You in your speech seemed, and in your viságe,
The day we celebrated our marriáge!

"'Tis truly said, at least I find it true,
(For in effect it has been proved on me,)
Love never is so old as when 'tis new.
But certés, lord, for no adversity,
Though death itself may come, shall it e'er be
With truth said, I in word or deed repent,
That I gave you my heart with full intent.

* * * *

"Your other jewels laid out you will see
Within your chamber, I dare here maintain;
Naked out of my father's house," quoth she,
"I came, and naked must return again.
To follow all your pleasure am I fain,
But hope you will not add unto my woe,
And make me shirtless from thy palace go."

* * * *

"The shirt," quoth he, "that thou hast on thy back,
Let it remain, and bear it forth with thee."
Filled with compassion was he, as he spake,
And out he went o'erwhelmed with great pitý.
Before her folk herself then strippéd she,
And in her shirt, with head and foot all bare,
Towards her father's home went, to live there.

The people followed her, and sadly wept,
And, as they went, cursed fortune every one;
But wept she never, but her eyes dry kept,
And at that time, of words, too, spake she none.
Her father, who these tidings heard anon,
Cursed both the day and season when natúre
First had him formed into a live creatúre.

* * * *

To meet his daughter went he hastily,
For by the noise he knew of her comíng,
And with her old dress, just as it might be,
He covered her, whilst mournfully weepíng;
Of little service 'twas it thus to bring,
For poor the cloth was, and of greater age
By many a day, since that of her marriáge.

And with her father, for a certain space,
Thus dwelt this flower of wifelike patience,
Who showed nor by her words nor by her face,
Before the people or in their absence,
That any one to her had given offence ;
Of her high rank no recollection
Had she, that by her countenance was shown.

No wonder 'tis, for in her high estate
Her spirit filled was with humility ;
No daintiness she showed in what she ate,
No stateliness, nor air of royalty ;
But full of patience and benignity
She was, and without pride, and honourable,
And to her husband ever meek and stable.

Men speak of Job for his humility,
And writers, when they wish, make much of it,
Especially in men, but truthfully,
Though men praise women but a little bit,
No man in humbleness can him acquit
As can a woman, nor be half so true,
As women can, unless 'tis something new.

Part VI.

The Earl of Panik from Bologna came,
Of whom the fame up sprang, as more or less
It to the people fully known became,
That he a new and youthful marchioness
Brought with him, with great pomp and wealthiness,
And that there ne'er had been seen with man's eye,
So noble an array in Lombardy.

The marquis, who had planned and knew this thing,
Ere that the earl came, sent a messenger,
That he to him might poor Griselda bring;
And she with humble heart and happier,
But with no pride nor swollen thought in her,
Came at his word, and on her knees she sank,
And reverently and meekly did him thank.

"It is, Griselda, my resolve," quoth he,
"That this maid, who shall wedded be to me,
Shall be received in my house royally,
As far as it is possible to be.
And eke that everyone in his degree,
According to his rank shall treated be,
And served, as I can best arrange truly.

"I have no women skilled sufficiently,
The chambers to arrange in such a way,
As I should wish, and therefore fain would I,
That thou shouldst have control in this, as aye;
Thou knowest eke of old my will, I say,
And though in truth thou art in thine array
But poorly clad, thy duty do, I pray."

"Not only, lord, now am I glad," quoth she,
"To do your will, but I desire also
To please you and to serve you faithfully,
Without pretence, and ever so will do.
And whilst I live, be it for weal or woe,
The spirit in my heart shall never cease
To love you, and endeavour you to please."

Forthwith the house began she to prepare,
And tables to set up and beds to make,
And pains she took, and would no trouble spare,
Praying the chambermaids, for goodness' sake,
To hasten them, and things to sweep and shake;
And she, who worked the hardest of them all,
Arrayed soon had the chambers, and the hall.

Towards mid-forenoon did this earl alight,
Who had with him these noble children brought,
And all the people ran to see the sight,
And her apparel, which was richly wrought;
And then at first amongst themselves they thought
That Walter was no fool, and they confessed
That changing thus his wife was for the best.

For she was fairer, as they judgéd all,
Than was Griselda, and of younger age,
And fairer fruit betwixt them both would fall,
And be more welcome from her lineage;
Her brother too so fair was of viságe,
That e'en to see them made men all rejoice,
Therefore they praised the marquis for his choice.

"O stormy people! fickle and untrue,
Aye indiscreet, and changing as a vane,
Delighting ever in a thing that's new,
For like the moon your spirits grow and wane;
All full of talk, and dear too at a Jane;[1]
Your judgment's false, your fickleness deceiveth,
He is a great fool who in you believeth."

[1] A small coin of Genoa.

Thus spake the steady folk in that city,
While gazing were the people up and down,
For they were right glad of the novelty
Of having a new lady in their town.
No more of this will I now mention;
But of Griselda will again commence
To tell the constancy and diligence.

Busy Griselda was in every thing
That to the marriage feast was pertinent,
And was in nought abashed by her clothing,
Though it was rude and eke was somewhat rent.
But with a bright face to the gate she went,
With other folk, to greet the marchioness,
And then attended to her business.

She with a happy face his guests received
So cleverly, each one in his degree,
That none of them the least mistake perceived;
But ever wondered all whom she could be,
That was arrayed so unbefittingly,
Yet showed such honour and respect; in fact
All praised her for her prudence and her tact.

She in the meanwhile scarcely ever ceased
This maiden and her brother to commend
With all her heart, and, in her praise at least,
Exceeded all that any could pretend
To think; but when at length these lords did wend
Their ways to supper, then did Walter call
Griselda, who was busy in the hall.

"Griselda," as it were in sport, he saith,
"How dost thou like my wife and her beauty?"
"Right well, my lord," quoth she; "for in good faith
I never saw a fairer maid than she.
I pray that God give her prosperity;
And so I hope that He will to you send
Enough of happiness till your life's end.

"One thing I warn you 'gainst, and would you bid,
That you nor goad nor fill with anguish keen
This tender maid, as you another did;
For she was, in her bringing up, I ween,
Nurtured more tenderly, as may be seen,
And never could endure adversity,
Like one who was brought up in poverty."

And when this Walter saw her patience,
And cheerful face, with no ill will at all,
And knew that while he oft had given offence,
She sad remained, but constant as a wall,
And ever kept her innocence through all,
This marquis stern compelled was to confess
His pity for her wife-like steadfastness.

"It is enough, Griselda mine," quoth he;
"Be now no more unhappy or afraid,
I have thy faith and thy benignity,
As much as ever woman was, assayed,
When thou wast great, and when poorly arrayed.
Now know I, my dear wife, thy steadfastness."
And he forthwith began her to caress.

And she for very wonder heeded nought,
Nor heard she anything he to her said;
She had but started from her sleep, she thought,
And filled was with amazement and with dread.
"Griseld, by God who died for us," he said,
"Thou art my wife, or else no wife I have,
Nor ever had, as God my soul shall save!

"This is thy daughter, whom thou hast supposed
To be my wife; that other faithfully
Shall be mine heir, as I have aye proposed;
Thou art the mother of them both truly.
I at Bologna kept them secretly;
Take them, for ne'er must thou now say again,
That thou hast lost one of thy children twain.

"But folk who otherwise have thought of me,
Let them take heed well that this deed I did,
Not out of malice nor for cruelty,
But 'twas to prove you I my purpose hid,
And not to slay my children, God forbid!
But that I might them keep in secret, till
I all thy purpose knew and eke thy will."

When she this heard, down did she fainting fall,
For very joy, and, after her swooning,
She both her children unto her did call,
And in her arms, most piteously weeping,
Embraced them both, and tenderly kissing
Them like a mother, with her tears, as 'twere,
She bathéd both their faces and their hair.

O, what a piteous thing it was to see
Her swooning, and her humble voice to hear!
"O Lord, I thank you heartily," quoth she,
"Who hast for me thus saved my children dear!
Were I to die now, little should I care;
Since I stand in your favour and your grace,
No matter if death stared me in the face!

"O, tender, dear, and youthful children mine,
Your woeful mother thought assuredly,
That cruel hands or else some foul vermín
Had eaten you; but God of His mercý,
And your benignant father tenderly,
Hath caused you to be kept;" and thereupon
All suddenly she on the ground fell down.

And in her swoon so tight a hold kept she
Of her two children in her glad embrace,
That it was very difficult to free
Them from her arms, as she lay in that place.
O many a tear on many a pitying face
Ran down, of them who stood there her beside;
Scarce were they able near her to abide.

Walter consoled her, and her griefs allayed;
And much amazed up rose she from her trance,
And all the people her to please essayed,
Till she regained again her countenance.
Walter cast on her many a kindly glance,
And it a pleasure was to see the fuss
Made 'twixt the two, who met together thus.

The ladies, when they saw their time had come,
Took her with them into a room alone,
And stripped from off her all her rags, and some
Her dressed in cloth of gold that brightly shone,
And, with a crown rich set with many a stone
Upon her head, they to the hall her brought,
And honoured her, as to have done they ought.

Thus had this piteous day a blissful end,
For men and women strove with all their might,
The day in mirth and revelry to spend,
Till in the welkin shone the stars full bright.
Than this feast ne'er was seen more grand a sight
Before; it cost as much again at least,
As did the revels at the marriage feast.

Full many a year in great prosperity,
Lived on these two in concord and in rest,
And happily, his daughter married he
Unto a lord, one of the worthiest
In Italy; and aye in peace and rest
His wife's old father in his court he kept,
Until the soul out of his body crept.

His son succeeded to his heritage,
In rest and peace, after his father's day;
And fortunate was eke in his marriáge,
Though he ne'er tried his wife in any way.
The world is weaker—who will me gainsay?—
Than it has been in olden times of yore,
And list to what the author saith therefore.

This story's told not that the wives all should
Follow Griselda in humility,
'Twould be intolerable, e'en if they could;
But that all people, each in his degree,
Should constant be throughout adversity,
As was Griselda, therefore Petrarch wrote
This story, which, in his high style, I quote.

For, since a woman showed such patience
Unto a mortal man, much more then ought
We humbly to receive what God us sends;
'Tis just for Him to test whate'er He wrought.
But never tempted He the man who sought
His love, as saith St. James, if ye him read;
He proveth folk all day, 'tis so indeed,—

And suffereth us, as for our exercise,
With diverse scourges of adversity,
To be tormented oft in sundry wise;
Not that He may know our desires, for He
Ere we were born, our frailty well could see;
And for our good is all His providence;
Let us then live in virtuous patience.

But hearken to one word, lords, ere I go:
It would be hard to find in these our days,
In any town Griseldas three or two;
For if of them we make correct assays,
The gold is found mixed with so much alayes[1]
Of brass, that though the coin be fair to see,
'Twill sooner break than bend assuredly.

[1] Alloy.

Wherefore now here, for love of her of Bath,—
And may she and her sect be ever seen
To have the mastery, as now she hath,—
I will with merry heart all fresh and green,
Sing you a song to gladden you, I ween,
And let us cease with serious mattér:
This is my song which runs in this mannér.

The Epilogue.

Dead is Griselda and her patience,
And both together buried in Itaille;[1]
Wherefore I cry unto mine audience,
Let no man brave enough be to assail
E'er his wife's patience, or expect to find
Griseldas, for he will most surely fail!

O noble wives, so full of great prudence,
Let not humility your tongues all nail,
Nor cause to clerks give, in their diligence,
To write of you so marvellous a tale,
As of Griselda, patient and kind,
Lest Chichevache[2] swell with you in her entrail!

Act like the echo, which ne'er keeps silénce,
But in return back answers without fail;
Be not befooléd in your innocence,
But wisely take in hand the *gouvernail*.[3]
And let this be imprinted in your mind
For common profit, since it may avail.

[1] Italy.

[2] This alludes to an old fable describing a cow, *Chiche Vache*, that was supposed to feed entirely on patient wives, and always remained very lean in consequence of the scarcity of the food.—*Skeat.*

[3] Assume the management.

Ye wives that rule, now stand at your defence,
Since ye be strong as is a great camaille ;[1]
And suffer not that men give you offence.
And slender wives, who weak are in bataille,[2]
Be eager as a tiger is in Ynde ;[3]
And like a mill, clack on, I you consaille.[4]

Fear not him, nor him treat with deference ;
For though thine husband arméd be in mail,
The arrows of thy bitter eloquence
Shall pierce his breast and eke his aventail ;[5]
With jealousy be careful him to bind,
And thou shalt make him cower like a quail.

If thou be fair, to folk in thy presénce
Show thou thy figure and thine apparaille ;[6]
If thou be ugly, stint in nought expense,
To get thee friends thine efforts ne'er should fail ;
In cheer be light as leaves are in the wind,
And let him anxious be, and weep and wail !

[1] Old English for "camel."
[2] Old English for "battle."
[3] India.
[4] Old English for "advise."
[5] The lower half of the movable part of a helmet which admitted air.—*Skeat.*
[6] Dress.

THE SECOND NUN'S TALE.[1]

THE maiden bright Cecile, as her life saith,
Was Roman born, and was of noble kind,
And from her cradle fostered in the faith
Of Christ, and bore His gospel in her mind.
She never ceased, as I it written find,
To say her prayers, and God to love and dread,
Beseeching Him to keep her unmarried.

And when this maiden was unto a man
To be espoused, who was full young in age,
And who yclepéd was Valerian,
And when the day had come of her marriáge,
She, full devout and humble in courage,
Under her robe of gold, that sat full fair,
Had clad herself next to her flesh in hair.

[1] This tale is translated from the life of Saint Cecilia, as given in the Legenda Aurea of Jacobus Januensis, who was Archbishop of Genoa at the close of the 13th century.—*Tyrwhitt.*

And when the organ made sweet melody,
Thus to her God alone in heart sang she:
"O Jesu Christ, lest I confounded be,
Unspotted keep my soul and my body."
And for His love who died upon a tree,
She every second or third day did fast,
And prayéd ever in her prayers full fast.

* * * *

And privily she to her husband said:
"O sweet and well-belovéd husband dear,
There is a secret, and you should it hear,
And which right fain I would unto you say,
If you'd but swear you would not me betray."

Valerian then fast began to swear,
That for no cause, whatever it might be,
Would he to any one betray her e'er;
And thus at length to him in truth said she:
"There is an angel bright who loveth me,
And who from love, whene'er I wake or sleep,
Is ready o'er my body watch to keep."

* * * *

Valerian, as in this tale is told,
Answered again: "If I must trust in thee,
Let me that angel see, and him behold;
For certes, if it a very angel be,
Then will I do as thou hast prayed of me;
If thou dost love another man, forsooth,
Right with this sword then will I slay you both."

Cecile replied anon right in this wise:
"If you do wish, the angel you shall see,
That you may trust in Christ and you baptize.
Go to the Via Appia," quoth she,
"That from the town doth stand of miles but three,
And to the poor and needy who there dwell,
Speak to them thus, as I shall to you tell.

"Tell them that I, Cecile, you to them sent,
To show to you the good Urban the old,
For secret reasons and a good intent.
And when you old Saint Urban shall behold,
Tell him the words that I to you have told;
And, when he hath you purged from sin, believe
Me, you shall see that angel ere you leave."

Valerian went to the place anon,
And right according to his wife's teaching,
He found this holy old Urban alone
Among the catacombs of saints hiding,
And he anon, and without tarrying,
Gave him his message; and when he it told,
Urban for joy his hands 'gan to up hold.

The tears from out his eyes began to fall.
"Almighty Lord, O Jesu Christ," quoth he,
"Sower of chaste words, and shepherd of us all,
The fruit of that same seed of chastity,
That Thou hast sown in Cecile take to Thee!
Lo, like a busy bee, with nought of guile,
Thee serveth aye Thine own servant, Cecile!

"For that same husband, whom she took but now
Full like a lion fierce, she sendeth here,
As meek as ever was a lamb, to you."
And as he spake, anon there did appear
An old man clad in clothes all white and clear,
Who held a book gold-lettered in his hand,
And right before Valerian did stand.

Valerian as dead fell down for dread,
When he thus saw him; and the old man bore
Him up anon, and from this book he read:
"One Lord, one faith, one Godhead, without more,
One Christendom and Father, who art o'er
All mankind, and above all everywhere."
And these words all with pure gold written were.

When this was read, then out spake this old man:
"Believest thou this thing? Say yea or nay."
"I do believe all," quoth Valerian,
"For truer thing than this no person may
E'en think of under heaven, I dare well say."
Then vanished the old man, he knew not where,
And this Pope Urban christened him right there.

Valerian went home, and found Cecilie
Within his room, and by her side did stand
An angel, who of roses and of lily
Two lovely crowns held, one in either hand.
And to Cecile, as I it understand,
He gave the one, and thereupon began
To take the other to Valerian.

"With body clean and undefiléd thought
Keep well for ever these two crowns," quoth he.
"From Paradise to you have I them brought,
And nevermore shall either rotten be,
Nor its sweet savour lose, now trust in me;
No one shall ever see them with his eye,
Unless he chaste be and hate villany.

"And thou, Valerian, for thou so soon
Didst give assent to good advice also,
Say what thou wilt, and thou shalt have thy boon."
He thus replied: "I have a brother, who
Loves me, and I on earth love no man so.
I pray you that my brother may have grace
To know the truth, as I do in this place."

The angel said: "God liketh thy request,
And ye both, with the palm of martyrdom,
Shall come hereafter to His blesséd feast."
Then did this same Tiburce his brother come.
And when he smelt the fragrance in the room,
Which same the roses and the lilies cast,
Within him he began to wonder fast,

And said: "I wonder, at this time of year,
Whence 'tis that that sweet fragrance cometh so
Of rose and lilies, that one smelleth here.
For e'en if I them had in my hands two,
The fragrance could not in me deeper go.
That same sweet smell, that in my heart I find,
Has made me feel all of another kind."

Valerian replied: "Two crowns have we,
Snow-white and rose-red, which so bright appear,
That with thine eyes thou never couldst them see;
But as thou smellest them right through my prayer,
So shalt thou see them, my own brother dear,
If only thou wilt, without sloth, forsooth,
Believe aright and know the very truth."

Tiburce replied: "Dost thou say this to me
In truth, or in my dreams do I hear this?"
"In dreams," replied Valerian, "have we
Been until now, own brother mine, true 'tis,
But now at last in truth our dwelling is."
"How know'st thou this?" quoth Tiburce, "In what way?"
Valerian replied: "Now will I say.

"God's angel unto me the truth hath taught,
Which thou shalt see, if thou wilt but renounce
Idols, and clean be, else thou shalt see nought."—
[1] [And of the miracle of these two crowns
Saint Ambrose in his preface thus recounts.
Full solemnly this noble doctor dear
Commendeth it, and saith as ye shall hear.

Of martyrdom the palm-branch to receive,
This Saint Cecilie, filled with God's good gift,
The world and marriage-chamber eke did leave;
Witness Tiburce's and Valerian's shrift,
To whom God of His bounty made a gift
Of two bright crowns of flowers all sweet-smelling,
And bade His angel them two crowns to bring.

[1] Tyrwhitt writes that this passage "appears evidently to have been a marginal observation, and to have crept into the Latin text by the blunder of some copyist."

The maid hath brought these men to bliss above
The world hath known what it is worth, 'tis plain,
To be devout, and chastity to love.]
Then did Cecile him show all clear and plain,
That every idol is a thing that's vain,
For they are dumb, and deaf as well are they,
And charged him to renounce his idols aye.

"Who doth not this believe, a beast he is,"
Replied this Tiburce, "if I do not lie."
And she then kissed his brow, on hearing this,
And was full glad he could the truth espy.
"This day will I take thee for mine ally,"
Replied this blesséd beauteous maiden dear
And after that she spake as ye may hear.

"Lo, right thus as the love of Christ," quoth she,
"Made me thy brother's wife, right in that wise,
Anon for mine ally here take I thee,
Since thou thine idols ever wilt despise.
Go with thy brother now and thee baptize,
And make thee clean; so that thou may'st behold
The angel's face of which thy brother told."

Tiburce replied and said: "My brother dear,
First tell me where to go, and to what man."
"To whom?" quoth he. "Come forth with right good cheer,
I will thee lead unto the Pope Urban."
"To Urban? brother mine, Valerian,"
Quoth then Tiburce, "wilt thou me thither lead?
Methinketh that it wondrous were indeed.

"Dost thou not mean that Urban," quoth he, "who
Hath been condemned so often to be dead,
Dwelling in hiding-places to and fro,
And daring never to put forth his head?
Men would him burn soon in a fire full red,
If he were found, or they could him espy,
And us for keeping with him company.

"And while we seek that same divinity,
That is in heaven hid from us privily,
Burned here at least in this world shall we be."
To whom Cecile thus answered fearlessly:
"Men might, I think, dread well and reasonably
This life on earth to lose, mine own dear brother,
If 'twere the only life without another.

"But there a better life is in that place
Above, which life shall ne'er be lost, fear nought,
And which God's Son us told of through His grace,
That Father's Son who here all things hath wrought;
And all who have been made with skilful thought,
The Ghost, who from the Father did proceed,
Hath quickened them, there is no doubt indeed.

"God's son by word and miracles as well,
When He was in this world, declaréd here,
There was another life where men may dwell."
To whom Tiburce replied: "O sister dear,
Thou saidst but now, as doth to me appear,
There is but one God, Lord in verity;
And now how dost thou witness bear of three?"

"That will I tell thee," quoth she; "now reflect,
That as a man hath in his wisdom three
Things, memory, and skill, and intellect,
So in one being of divinity,
Full possibly three persons may there be."
Then she began full busily to preach
Of Christ, and of His sufferings to teach,

And many points about His passion;
And how God's Son men did on earth behold,
Sent down to give us full remission,
Who were all bound by sin and sorrows old:
All this and more unto Tiburce she told.
And afterwards he, with Valerian,
Went willingly to seek the Pope Urban,

Who thankéd God; and with glad heart and light,
He christened him, and made him in that place
In learning perfect, and of God a knight.
And after this Tiburce obtained such grace,
Each day he saw, as it were face to face,
Th' angel of God; and every kind of boon
He asked of God, was granted him full soon.

It were hard in their order to explain,
How many wonders Jesus for them wrought;
Until at last, to put it short and plain,
The sergeants of the town of Rome them sought,
And them before Almache [1] the prefect brought,
Who questioned them, and learnt all their intent,
And to th' image of Jupiter them sent,

[1] Almachius.

And said: "Cut off the heads of them who do
Not sacrifice, this is my sentence here."
These martyrs, then, of whom I spake to you,
One Maximus, who was an officer
Of this Prefect, and his corniculer,[1]
Them seized; and when he forth the martyrs led,
Such pity felt he, bitter tears he shed.

When Maximus had heard their saintly lore,
He of the executioners got leave,
And led them to his own house without more;
And with their preaching, ere that it were eve,
They caused the executioners to leave
(And Maximus and his men every one,)
The false faith, and to trust in God alone.

Cecilie came to them when it was night,
With priests who christened them all in that place,
And afterwards, as soon as it was light,
Cecilie said to them with full grave face:
"Now Christ's own knights, beloved and dear, erase
And cast away the foul works of darknéss,
And arm yourselves in armour of brightnéss.

"Ye have forsooth fought in a great battáille,[2]
Your course is run, your faith have ye preserved,
Seek for the crown of life, which cannot fail;
The just and rightful Judge whom ye have served,
Shall give it you, as ye have it deserved."
When she had spoken, as I here have said,
To sacrifice to false gods were they led.

[1] Some subordinate officer, but what this man's exact office was is not very clear.

[2] Old English for "battle."

But when these martyrs to the place were brought,
To tell you shortly the conclusion,
With incense or with sacrifice they nought
Would have to do, but on their knees knelt down,
With humble heart and sad devotion,
And quickly lost their heads there in that place,
And both their souls went to the King of grace.

This Maximus, who saw this thing betide,
With piteous tears described anon the sight,
How up to heaven he their souls saw glide,
With angels full of brightness and of light;
And with his word converted many a wight;
For which Almache caused men, with whips of lead
To beat him cruelly, till he was dead.

Cecile him took, and buried him anon
By Tiburce and his brother tenderly,
Within their burying place, beneath the stone.
And after that Almache full hastily
Bade officers bring to him openly
Cecile, so that she might in his presénce
Do sacrifice, and offer up incense.

But they, converted by her learning, sore
Wept all of them, and gave complete credénce
Unto her word, and cried out more and more:
"Christ, God's Son, without any difference,[1]
Is very God, this is all our senténce,
Who hath so good a servant Him to serve;
This think we, though to die we may deserve!"

[1] In might, majesty, or glory.

Almachius,[1] who heard of this doing,
Bade men fetch Cecile, that he might her see,
And first of all this was his questioning:
"What kind of woman art thou?" then quoth he.
"I am a gentlewoman born," quoth she.
"I ask thee," quoth he, "though it cause thee grief,
Of thy religion and of thy belief."

"You have begun your question foolishly,"
Replied she, "who two answers would include
In one demand; you asked ignorantly."
Almache replied to that similitude:[2]
"From whence doth come this answering so rude?"
"From whence?" quoth she (to answer him constrained),
"Of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned."

To this Almache said: "Takest thou no heed
Of any power of mine?" Thus answered she:
"Your might," quoth she, "doth cause me little dread;
For every mortal man's power is, I see,
But like a bladder full of wind truly.
For pricked with needle's point, when it is blown,
The boast of it to nought soon dwindles down."

"Full wrongfully didst thou begin," quoth he,
"And yet in wrong dost thou now persevere;
Know'st thou not how our mighty princes free
Have thus commanded and the law made clear,
That Christians all the penalty must bear,
Lest they renounce their Christianity,
But shall go quit, if they will it deny?"

[1] Chaucer sometimes calls this man Almache, and sometimes, as here, Almachius. [2] Similitude here means proposition.

"Your princes err, as all your nobles do,"
Quoth then Cecile, "and with a mad senténce
Ye make us guilty, and it is not true;
For ye, who all know well our innocence,
Because we wish to show our reverence
For Christ, and since we bear a Christian name,
Accuse us of a crime, and eke us blame.

"But we who know that same name to be so
Of virtue full, we may it not deny."
Almache then answered: "Choose one of these two—
Do sacrifice or Christianity
Renounce, that thou thus may'st escape truly."
At which the holy blesséd happy maid
Began to laugh, and to the judge she said:

"O judge, thou art convicted of folly;
Would'st thou that I denied my innocence,
To make me thus a wicked wight?" quoth she.
"Lo! he dissimulates in audience,
He stares and acts as if he'd lost all sense!"
To whom Almache replied: "Unhappy wretch,
Thou dost not know how far my might may stretch.

"Did not our mighty princes to me give,
Yea, both the power and the authority
To cause mankind to die or let them live?
Why speakest thou so proudly then to me?"
"I do now speak but firmly," answered she,
"Not proudly, for I tell you on my side,
We deadly hate that very vice of pride.

"And if thou dost not dread a truth to hear,
Then will I show all openly, by right,
That thou hast told a full great falsehood here.
Thou say'st thy princes have thee given the might
To slay, and eke to give life to a wight.
Thou canst but only take a life away;
Thou hast none other power than that I say!

"Thou mayest say thy princes did thee make
Death's minister; but if thou as before
Dost speak, thou liest, for thy power is weak."
"Away with boldness," said Almache, and swore;
"Go sacrifice to our gods without more.
I do not care what wrong men me proffer,
I can it bear like a philosopher;

"But those profane words can I not endure,
Which thou against our gods dost speak," quoth he.
Cecile him answered: "O foolish creatúre,
Thou saidst no word since thou didst speak to me,
But clearly proved thine imbecility,
And that thou wast in truth, in every wise,
A silly officer and vain justíce.

"There lacketh nothing to thine outer eye
To make thee blind; for that which we see all
Is but a stone, as men may well espy,
That very stone, a god thou wilt it call.
I thee advise, thine hand let on it fall,
And feel it well, and stone thou shalt it find,
Since thou canst not see with thine eyes so blind.

"It is a shame that all the people shall
Despise thee so, and laugh at thy folly;
For people know full well in general,
That mighty God is in His heaven on high,
And that their images are certainly
Of none avail to them or in His sight,
For in effect they are not worth a mite."

These words and others such-like answered she,
And he waxed wroth, and bade men her to lead
Home to her house; "And in her house," quoth he,
"Burn her right in a bath with flames all red."
And as he bade, right so was done indeed;
For in a bath anon they did her shut,
And night and day did fire beneath it put.

Throughout the long night and a day also,
For all the fire and eke the bath's great heat,
She sat within all cold, and felt no woe,
It made her not a single drop to sweat.
But in that bath her death she soon did meet;
For he, Almache, with villainous intent,
To slay her in the bath, a message sent.

Three times essayed to cut her neck in two,
This cruel executioner, but he
Ne'er could succeed in severing it through;
And, as at that time, 'twas ruled by decree,
That no man ever should permitted be
To smite a man with four strokes, soft or sore,
This executioner dared do no more.

But half dead with her neck gashed here and there,
He let her lie, and on his way he went.
The Christian folk, who round about her were,
With sheets the blood stopped, ere it all were spent.
And for three days she lived in this torment,
And never ceased she them the faith to teach,
And, to those whom she'd fostered, did she preach.

And them she gave her goods and everything,
And to Pope Urban's charge committed all,
And said: "I asked this of the heavenly King,
To have a respite, be it e'er so small,
To entrust to you these souls ere that I shall
Expire, and that I might permitted be,
To make my house a church perpetually."

Saint Urban with his deacons privily
The body fetched, and buried it by night,
Among his other saints full decently.
The church was named after Cecile the bright;
Saint Urban hallowed it, as he well might;
In which, unto this day in noble wise,
Men do to Christ and to His saint service.

PROLOGUE TO THE CANON'S YEOMAN'S TALE.

WHEN ended was the tale of Saint Cecíle,
Ere we had ridden onward many a mile,
At Boughton-under-Blean, us to o'ertake
A man began, who clothéd was in black,
And underneath a long white surplice wore.
His horse was of a dapple-gray colóur,
And sweated so that wondrous 'twas to see;
It seeméd he of miles had ridden three.
The horse eke, that his yeoman rode upon,
So sweated that it scarcely could go on.
About the breast-piece stood the foam full high,
He was with foam all spotted as a pie.
A double bag upon his crupper lay,
It seeméd that he carried light array.
Dressed as for summer rode this worthy man,
And in my heart to wonder I began,
What he might be, until I understood
How that his cloak was sewn unto his hood;
For which, when I had long adviséd me,
Some Canon I anon him deemed to be.

His hat hung at his back down by a lace,
For he had ridden at a rapid pace;
He had, aye, galloped as a madman would,
A leaf of burdock had he 'neath his hood,
To check the sweat, and keep his head from heat.
But 'twas a very joy to see him sweat!
His forehead ran down, just as drops a still,
Which men with plantain or pellitory fill.
And when he came, he loud began to cry,
"God save," quoth he, "this jolly company!
Fast have I ridden," quoth he, "for your sake,
Because I anxious was you to o'ertake,
To ride on with this merry company."
His yeoman eke was full of courtesy,
And said he: "Sirs, now in this morning-tide,
Out of your hostelry I saw you ride,
And warnéd here my lord and sovereign,
Who in your company to ride was fain,
For his amusement, loving playfulness."
"Friend, for thy warning God give thee success,"
Thus said our host, "for certés, it would seem
Thy lord were wise, and so I will him deem;
He is jocund as well, I dare bet you.
Can he us tell a merry tale or two,
With which he may delight this company?"
"Who, sir? my lord? yea, yea, without a lie,
He knows of mirth and joviality
More than enough; also, sir, trust in me,
If you him did but know as well as I,
You wonder would how well and cunningly
He worketh, and that too in sundry wise.
He hath engaged in many an enterprise,

Which would be hard for any who are here
To bring about, save he them taught, 'tis clear.
As he sans façon rideth with you now,
If you him knew, 'twould be a gain to you;
His friendship you would not forego, I say,
For much good, I dare in the balance weigh
All that I have in my possession.
He is a man of great discretion,
I warn you well he is the best of men."
"Well," quoth our host, "I pray thee tell me then,
Is he a clerk or no? Say what is he."
"Nay, he is greater than a clerk truly,"
Replied this yeoman, "and, host, in a few
Words, of his skill somewhat I will you show.
"I say, my lord doth know such subtlety,
(But all his skill you cannot learn from me,
Though I him help somewhat in his workíng)
That all this ground on which we are ridíng,
Until we come to Canterbury town,
He could the same clean turn all upside down
And pave it all with silver and with gold."
And when this yeoman thus these things had told,
Unto our host, he said: "*Benedicite!*
This thing in truth is marvellous to me,
(Since that thy lord possesseth such prudénce,
That men should treat him all with deference,)
That of his honour he is reckless quite;
His upper garment is not worth a mite,
It is in fact, as I to heaven may go,
All dirty, and is torn in half also!
Why is thy lord so sluttish, fain would I
Know, when he power hath better clothes to buy,

If his deeds truly tally with thy speech?
Now tell me that, and that I thee beseech."
"Why," quoth this yeoman, "do you ask of me?
God help me so, for never thrive shall he!
(But I would not avow that which I say,
And therefore keep it secret, I you pray.)
He is too wise, as I believe, forsooth;
That which is overdone will ne'er in truth
Prove right; as writers say, it is a vice.
Wherefore in that I hold him far from wise;
For when a man hath over much of wit,
Full oft it happeneth he misuseth it;
So doth my lord, and that me grieveth sore;
God it amend; I can here say no more."
"Heed that no more, good yeoman," quoth our host;
"Since of the cunning of thy lord thou know'st,
Tell how he doth, I pray thee heartily,
Since he so very crafty is and sly.
Where do you dwell, if it now told may be?"
"'Tis in the suburbs of a town," quoth he,
"Lurking in corners and in alleys blind,
Such as where robbers and men of that kind
Are ever wont in secret to reside,
As they who anxious are themselves to hide,
That we do live, if I shall speak truly."
"Still," quoth our host, "now let me talk to thee;
Why art thou so discoloured in thy face?"
"Peter!" quoth he, "God grant me now His grace,
I'm so accustomed in the fire to blow,
That it hath all my colour changed, I trow.

I am not wont in mirror oft to pry,
But to work hard and learn to multiply.[1]
We blunder e'er, and pore into the fire,
And for all that we fail in our desire,
For we ne'er come to a conclusion.
Full many folk we by illusion
Deceive, and borrow gold, a pound or two,
Or ten or twelve, and many sums also,
And make them all suppose, by doing so,
That of a pound we know how to make two!
Yet is it false, but aye we have good hope
To do it soon, and after it we grope.
But that science so far off doth appear,
We cannot, though to do it we may swear,
It overtake, it slips away so fast;
It will make beggars of us all at last."
While thus this yeoman was to them talking,
The Canon drew near and heard everything
That said this yeoman, for suspicion
Of all men's speech had ever this Canón.
For Cato saith, that he, who guilty is,
Thinketh that all men speak of him amiss.
That was the cause that to his yeoman made
Him draw so nigh, to hear all that he said.
And thus said he unto his yeoman then:
"Have peace, and speak no words more to these men,
For if thou dost, thou shalt it dearly pay;
Thou sland'rest me here in this company,

[1] "This was the technical term employed by alchemists to denote their supposed power of transmuting the baser metals into gold."—*Skeat.*

And dost reveal that which thou shouldest hide."
"You," quoth our host, "tell on, whate'er betide
For all his foolish threats care not a tittle!"
"In faith," quoth he, "no more I do but little."
And when this Canon saw nought would avail,
But that this man his secrets would reveal,
He fled away for very grief and shame.
"Ha!" quoth the yeoman, "now we'll have a game.
All that I know, anon here tell I will,
Since he is gone, and may the fiend him kill!
I would again not meet him anywhere,
Not for a penny nor a pound, I swear!
He who me brought first to that pretty game,
Ere he shall die, may he have grief and shame!
For serious to me 'tis, by my faith;
That feel I well, whate'er another saith.
And yet for all my pain and wretchedness,
For all my sorrow, labour, and distress,
I could not give it up in any wise.
Now would to God my learning might suffice
To tell you all relating to that art!
But ne'ertheless I will you tell in part;
Since gone my lord is, him I will not spare;
And such things as I know I will declare."

THE TALE OF THE CANON'S YEOMAN.

Part I.

SEVEN years have I dwelt with this Canon, yet
I to his science none the nearer get.
All that I once had, I have lost thereby;
And, God knows, so have many more than I.
Once was I wont to be right fresh and gay
In all my clothing, and of good array,
Now might I wear a stocking on my head;
And where my colour was both fresh and red,
Now is it wan and of a leaden hue.
Whoso it practiseth, sore will it rue.
For all my labour too, bleared is mine eye;
What have I gained trying to multiply!
That slippery science hath me left so bare,
That wheresoe'er I go, I badly fare;
And yet I am indebted so thereby,
For gold that has been lent to me, truly,
That, while I live, I shall repay it never.
Let every man be warned by me for ever!

What man soe'er devoteth him thereto,
If he persist, his fortune soon will go.
So help me God, thereby he will not win,
But drain his purse, and will his wits make thin.
And when he through his madness and folly,
Hath put his own goods into jeopardy,
Then he will urge on other folk anon
To lose their goods as he himself hath done.
For wicked men it doth rejoice and please,
To see their friends in pain and ill at ease;
Thus was I once told by a learnéd clerk.
No matter that, I will speak of our work.
When we are there, and whilst we exercise
Our implike craft, we seem so wondrous wise,
Our terms they are so learnéd and so quaint.
I blow the fire until I nearly faint.
Why should I tell you the proportion
Of each of those things that we work upon,
As it five or six ounces well may be
Of silver, or some other quantity?
Why should I busy me to tell you tales
Of orpiment, burnt bones, or iron scales,
That into powder ground down are full small?
And how in earthen pots first put is all,
And salt is added, and also peppér,
Ere powdered 'tis, as I said earlier,
And well o'ercovered with a plate of glass,
And many another thing, too, that there was?
And of the pot and glasses fastening,
So that of air there might pass out nothing?
And of the gentle fire and brisk also,
Which next was made? and of the care and woe

Which we endured oft in the sublimation,
Amalgamation, or the calcination
Of quicksilver, yclept crude mercury?
For all our skill but poor success have we.
Our orpiment and sublimed mercury,
Our litharge ground eke on the porphyry,
Of little use are either, it is plain,
They do not help us, and we toil in vain.
Our gases eke in their ascension,
And things that at the bottom all lie down,
Ne'er in our working will avail us ought.
For lost is all the labour, time, and thought,
That we have spent on it, and all the cost,
Which we out on it laid, is also lost.
  There also is full many another thing,
That is unto our craft appertainíng;
Though I them in their order never can
Recount, because I am an ignorant man,
Yet will I tell them, as they come to mind,
Though I could ne'er enumerate each kind:
As bol armoniak,[1] verdegrees,[2] boras,[3]
And sundry vessels made of earth and glass
Our many bottles, and our descensories,[4]
Our vials, crucibles, sublimatories,[5]

[1] "A fine compact clay, often highly coloured with varying in shades of colour from white to yellowish, reddisl and brownish."—*Skeat.*

[2] The bibasic acetate of copper.—*Skeat.*

[3] Borax.

[4] These were vessels used in chemistry for extracting *descensum.*—*Tyrwhitt.*

[5] Vessels used for sublimation.

Our cucurbites,[1] and our alembics[2] eke,
And other such-like things, dear at a leek.
There is no need here to recount them all,
The water reddening, and the bowls of gall,
The arsenic, sal ammoniac, and brimstone;
And herbs, too, could I tell of many a one,
Moon-wort, valerian, agrimony,
And others such-like, if I wished to try.
Our lamps all burning both by day and night,
To bring about our work, if but we might;
Our furnace eke for calcination,
Of waters too the albefaction,
The unslacked lime, the white of egg, chalk, aye,
And diverse powders, ashes, muck, and clay,
Waxed bags, saltpetre, and the vitriol,
And diverse fires made both of wood and coal;
Prepared salt, alkaly, salt of tartár,
Coagulated and eke burnt mattér,
Clay mixed with man's and horse's hair, and oil
Of tartar, alum, glass, barm, wort, argoile,[3]
Resalgar,[4] and eke the absorption;
Of substances th' incorporation,
Of silver eke the citrination,
The fixing down, and fermentation,
The moulds, and tests, and much besides truly.
I will you tell, as they were taught to me,
The spirits four, and metals seven, the same
In order, as I heard my lord them name.

[1] A chemical vessel in the shape of a gourd, used for distilling.
[2] Vessels used in distilling.
[3] Potter's clay.
[4] Red arsenic.

Of spirits men the first quicksilver call,
The next is orpiment, the third is sal
Ammoniac, and eke the fourth brimstóne.
  The metals seven I will recount anon ;
Sol then for gold, Luna for silver stand,
Mars iron, Mercury quicksilver, and
Saturn for lead, and Jupiter for tin,
And Venus copper, by my father's kin !
  This curséd craft, whoso will exercise,
He will no good gain that him will suffice ;
For all the goods he spendeth thereabout,
He will soon lose, thereof I have no doubt.
Whoso would show his imbecility,
Let him come forth and learn to multiply ;
And all men who ought have in their cofférs,
Let them appear and wax philosophers.
The craft is quickly learnt, you would inquire ?
Nay, nay, God knows, though he be monk or friar,
Canon, or priest, or any other wight,
And though he sit at books both day and night,
In learning of this implike foolish lore,
'Twill be in vain, and, by my faith, much more !
To teach a foolish man this subtlety,
Fy ! thereof speak not, for it could not be ;
Though he know book-lore or though know he none,
He in effect, will e'er it find all one.
For both the two, by my salvation,
Succeed will in multiplication,
Alike well, and whatever they may do,
That is to say, they fail will both the two.
  Yet in my list did I forget to speak
Of waters that corrode, and filings eke,

Of bodies the mollification,
And also of their induration,
Washings, and oils, and metals fusible,
To tell the whole would not be possible
In any book; wherefore, as it is best,
From giving all these names I now will rest.
For, as I trow, I have you told enough
To raise a fiend, though look he ne'er so rough.
Let be; there is, Elixir called, the stone
Of the philosopher, which everyone
Seeketh. With it we should be sure enough;
But I a vow make unto God above,
For all your skill, whatever you may do,
And all your craft, it will not come to you.
It hath us caused to spend a goodly sum,
For grief at which we should have mad become,
Save that good hope e'er creepeth in our heart,
Believing, that although we sorely smart,
We shall relieved be by it afterward.
Such hopes and fancies cut us sharp and hard;
I warn you well, you'll have to seek for ever.
That future tense hath caused men to dissever,
Trusting therein, from all that e'er they had.
Yet in that art they ne'er wax wise, though sad,
For unto them it is a bitter sweet;
So seemeth it, for had they but a sheet,
In which they might them wrap up in the night,
And had a cloth to walk in by daylight,
They would them sell, and spend what thus was gained;
They could not stop whilst ought to them remained.
And evermore, wherever they may go,
Men by the smell of brimstone may them know,

For all the world they stink just like a goat;
Their savour is so ram-like and so hot,
That though a man from them a mile may be,
The savour will infect him, trust in me;
Lo, thus by smelling and threadbare array,
If men wish, they these folk may know alway.
And if a man would ask them privily,
Why they were clothéd so unthriftily,
They right anon would whisper in his ear,
And say that if they e'er espiéd were,
Men would them slay because of their sciénce;
Lo, thus these folk betray their innocence!
Pass over this; I'll to my tale now haste.
Ere that the pot upon the fire is placed,
My lord first with a certain quantity
Of metals tempereth them, and none but he,
(Now he is gone, I dare say fearlessly,)
For as men say, he doth it craftily;
Certés, I know well he hath such a name,
And yet full oft he giveth cause for blame;
And know ye how? Sometimes, then, be it known
The pot doth break, and farewell! all is gone!
These metals are so violent and strong,
Our walls could not resistance make for long,
Save that they were all wrought with lime and stone
They pierce them so, and through the wall are gone
And some of them sink down into the ground,
(Thus have we lost at times full many a pound)
And some are scattered on the floor about,
Some leap unto the roof; without a doubt,
Though in our sight the fiend doth not him show,
I trow he is with us, the wicked shrew!

For down in hell, where he is lord and sire,
There never is more rancour, woe, nor ire.
When our pot thus is broken, as I've said,
Each man doth chide, and hold him ill repaid.
One saith it was caused by the fire makíng;
Another, nay! 'twas caused by the blowíng;
(Then did I fear, for that was my office);
"Straw," quoth a third, "ye are not very wise,
It was not tempered as it ought to be."
"Nay," quoth a fourth, "stop now and list to me;
Because our fire was not of beechwood made,
That is the cause, 'tis clearly as I've said."
I cannot tell the cause to save my life,
But well I know with us great was the strife.
"What!" quoth my lord, "there's nothing to be done,
I of these perils will take warning soon;
I am right sure now that the pot was cracked;
Be not amazed, whatever was the fact;
As is our custom, let us sweep the floor,
Pluck up your hearts and happy be once more."
The rubbish in a heap then swept up was,
And on the floor was cast a coarse canvás,
And all this rubbish in a sieve was thrown,
And, when examined, sifted up and down.
"Pardé," quoth one, "somewhat of our metál
Yet is there here, though we've not got it all.
Although this thing hath happened to us now,
Another time it may be well, I trow.
We must our goods e'er risk in this ventúre;
A merchant, pardé! may not aye endure,
Now trust me well, in his prosperity;
Sometimes his goods are drenchéd in the sea,

And sometimes come unto the land safely."
"Peace!" quoth my lord, "the next time I will try
To use our knowledge more successfully;
And save I do, sirs, blamed then let me be;
There was some fault, none can say there was not."
Another said the fire was over hot:
But be it hot or cold, I dare say this,
That we e'er our conclusions draw amiss.
We fail to find that which we all would have,
And in our madness evermore we rave.
And when we are together every one,
Each man he seemeth quite a Solomon.
But everything that shineth bright as gold,
Is not gold, as I oft have heard it told;
Nor is an apple, fair unto the eye,
Good alway, whatsoe'er men say or cry.
Right so, lo! fareth it with all of us;
He who the wisest seemeth, by Jesus!
A fool is proved, and 'tis a source of grief,
That he who seemeth truest is a thief;
That shall ye know, ere I my way shall wend,
By what I to my tale have made an end.

Part II.

There is a Canon of religion
Living with us, who would infect a town,
Though it as great were as was Nineveh,
Rome, Alexandria, Troy, and other three
Besides. His cunning and deceitfulness
Are such as no man could describe, I guess,

Though he might live for many a thousand year.
He in this world of falsehood has no peer;
For in his phrases so he will him wind,
And speak words of so very sly a kind,
Whene'er he will commune with any wight,
That he anon will make him foolish quite,
Save it a fiend be, as himself he is.
Full many a man hath he beguiled ere this,
And will, if he may live but yet awhile;
And yet men ride and walk full many a mile,
To seek him and acquaintance make with him,
Nought knowing of his teaching false and grim.
And if you wish to give me audience,
I will it here describe in your presénce.
  But worshipful Canons religious,
Think not that I would slander now your house,
Although my tale may of a Canon be.
In every Order some are bad, pardé,
And God forbid that a whole company
Should suffer for a single man's folly.
To slander you was never my intent,
But to correct what was amiss, I meant.
This story was not only told for you,
But eke for others; and ye know well how
'Twas, that amongst the Christ's apostles twelve,
There was no traitor save Judas himself.
Then why should all the rest of them have blame,
Who guiltless were? Of you I say the same.
Save only this, if ye will list to me,
If any Judas in your convent be,
Remove him thence betimes, I you entreat,
If ye may dread with shame or loss to meet.

And be in nought displeaséd, I you pray,
But hearken in this case to what I say.
  In London lived a priest, an annueleer,[1]
Who had there sojourned for full many a year,
And was so pleasant and so serviceáble
Unto the woman, where he kept his table,
That she would ne'er allow him ought to pay
For board or clothing, were he e'er so gay;
Silver to spend too, quite enough had he;
No matter; I will now proceed quickly
To tell to you my tale of this Canón,
Who brought this priest to great confusion.
  This wicked Canon came upon a day
Unto this same priest's chamber, where he lay,
Beseeching him to lend him a certáin
Amount of gold, which he would pay again.
"Lend me a mark, but for three days," quoth he,
And at my day I will requite it thee;
And if so be, I you shall fail to pay,
Then hang me by the neck another day."
  This priest him gave a mark full readily,
And him this Canon thanked repeatedly,
And took his leave and went upon his way,
And on the third day brought him his monéy,

[1] They were so called, not from their receiving a yearly stipend, but from their being employed solely in singing *Annuals*, or *Anniversary Masses* for the dead, without any cure of souls. See the Stat. 36 Ed. III., c. viii., where the *Chapelleins Parochiels* are distinguished from other *Chantanz Annales, et a cure des almes nient entendantz*. They were both to receive yearly stipends, but the former was allowed to take six marks, and the latter only five. Compare Hen. V., Stat. 2, c. ii., where the stipend of the one was raised to eight marks and of the other to seven.—*Tyrwhitt.*

And to the priest he gave his gold again,
Whereof the priest to be right glad was fain.
"Certés," quoth he, "it nought annoyeth me
To lend a man of nobles two or three,
Or any thing in my possession,
Who so true is to his condition,
That he in no wise e'er will break his day;
To such a man I never could say nay."
"What!" quoth this Canon, "should I be untrue?
That would indeed be something all anew.
Troth is a thing that I will ever keep,
Till that day when into my grave I creep;
That it be not so, God forbid indeed;
Believe in this as surely as your creed.
God thank I, and in good time be it said,
That there was never man yet ill repaid
For gold or silver that he to me lent,
And in my heart I to be false ne'er meant.
And, sir," quoth he, "I tell you privily,
Since you so goodly have been unto me,
And have to me shown so great gentleness,
Somewhat you to requite your kindliness,
I will you show, and if you wish to hear,
I will you teach full plainly the mannér
In which I can work in philosophy.
Now take good heed, you shall see with your eye,
That I'll a masterpiece do, ere I go."
"Yea," quoth the priest, "you, sir, will you do so?
Marie! thereof I pray you heartily!"
"At your command, sir, be it so truly,"
Replied the Canon, "or else God forbid!"
Lo, how this thief could for his service bid!

Full true it is, that such proffered servíce
Is hateful, as bear witness th' old and wise;
And that full quickly I will verify
In this same Canon, root of treachery,
Who ever hath delight and happy is,
(Such fiendish thoughts themselves on him impress)
If he to mischief may Christ's people bring;
God keep us from his false dissimuling!
Nought knew the priest with whom it was he dealt,
And of the harm to come he nothing felt.
O foolish innocent! O priest weak-minded,
With covetousness thou shalt soon be blinded!
O graceless man, full blind is thy conceit,
By nought wilt thou warned of the deceit,
Which this fox slily hath prepared for thee!
From his deep stratagems thou canst not flee.
And thus to come to the conclusion,
That doth relate to thy confusion,
Unhappy man! I will pass hastily,
And tell thy want of wit and thy folly,
And eke the falseness of that other wretch,
As far as my ability may stretch.
This Canon was my lord, ye think, I ween?
Sir host, in faith, and by the heavenly queen,
It was another Canon, and not he,
Who knew a hundredfold more subtlety!
He hath betrayéd people many a time;
Of his deceit it makes me dull to rhyme.
Whene'er I of his falsehood speak indeed,
For very shame of him my cheeks wax red;
At any rate they do begin to glow,
For redness have I none, right well I know,

In my face; for as ye have heard me say,
The diverse fumes of metals, well-a-day!
Consumed and wasted have all my redness.
Now take heed of this Canon's cursedness!
"Sir," quoth he to the priest, "send now your knave
For quicksilver, that we it here may have;
And let him bring of ounces two or three;
And when he cometh, quickly shall ye see
A wondrous thing which ye ne'er saw e'er this."
"Sir," quoth the priest, "I will, I you promise."
He bade his servant fetch for him this thing,
And he all ready was at his biddíng,
And forth he went, and came anon again,
With this quicksilver, here to put it plain,
And to the Canon took these ounces three;
And forthwith fair and well down laid them he,
And bade the servant quickly coals to bring,
That he might right anon begin workíng.
The coals were fetched as quick as possible,
And this same Canon took a crucible
From out his breast, and showed it to the priest.
"This instrument," quoth he, "which thou here seest,
Take in thine hand, and put thyself therein
An ounce of this quicksilver, and begin,
In name of Christ, to wax philosopher.
There are full few, to whom I would offer
To show to them thus much of my sciénce.
For you shall see here, by experience,
That this quicksilver will I mortify
Right in your sight anon, without a lie,
And make it as good silver and as fine,
As there is any in your purse or mine,

Or elsewhere, and will make it malleable;
Or else, now hold me false, and unable
Amongst good folk for ever to appear!
"I have a powder here, which cost me dear,
That shall work wonders, for 'tis cause of all
The cunning which I know, and you soon shall.
Send off your man, and let him go without,
And shut the door, whilst we may be about
Our secret labour, that none may espy
Us, whilst we work in this philosophy."
All as he bade, 'twas quickly brought about;
This servant right anon was sent without,
And his own master shut the door anon,
And to their labour they were left alone.
The priest, at this same Canon's base bidding,
Upon the fire anon he set this thing,
And blew the fire, and busied him full fast.
Into the crucible this Canon cast
A powder, I know not of what it was
Made, save it was of chalk or else of glass,
Or something else that was not worth a fly,
To blind the priest; and bade him haste to try
And place the coals around and all above
The crucible, "for here to show my love
For thee," this Canon said, "thine own hands two
Shall do the whole work that there is to do."
"Gramercy," quoth the priest, and was full glad,
And laid the coals, as him the Canon bade.
And while he busy was, this fiendish wretch,
This wicked Canon—the foul fiend him fetch!—
Out of his bosom took a beechen coal,
In which full craftily was made a hole,

Wherein of silver filings placed had he
An ounce, and stopped up had full carefully
The hole with wax, to keep the filings in.
And understand ye, that this false machine
Had not been made there, but was made before;
And I of other things will tell thee more
Hereafter, which this man had with him brought;
Ere he came there, the priest to cheat he thought,
And so he did, ere that he went away;
Till he'd him fooled, he could not rest that day.
It maketh me dull, when I of him speak,
Fain would I on his falsehood vengeance wreak,
If I knew how; but he is here and there;
He fickle is, and will abide nowhere.
"But take ye heed now, sirs, for God's own love!
He took his coal of which I spake above,
And in his hand he bore it secretly,
And whilst the priest arrangéd busily
The coals, as I have told to you ere this,
This Canon said: "My friend, you do amiss;
This is not set up as it ought to be;
But I will it amend anon," quoth he.
"Now let me meddle therewith but a while,
For I of you have pity, by Saint Gyle!
You are right hot, I see well how you sweat,
Take here this cloth, and wipe away the wet."
And whilst the poor priest wipéd thus his face,
This Canon took his coal with sorry grace,
And laid it up athwart the crucible,
And afterward the fire he blew full well,
Until the coals to burn right fast began.
"Now give us drink," then quoth this wicked man,

"And all shall soon be well, I undertake;
We will sit down, and let us merry make."
And when this wicked Canon's beechen coal
Was burnt up, all the filings from the hole,
Into the crucible anon fell down;
For 'twas compelled to do so by reasón
That it above the pot e'en lying was;
But thereof nothing knew the priest, alas!
He deemed that all the coals alike were good,
For of that trick he nothing understood.
When the alchemist his opportunity
Saw, "Rise," quoth he, "Sir priest, and stand by me;
And, as of moulds have I here none, go walk
Now forth, and bring to me a piece of chalk;
For into such a shape then quickly will
I cut it, as a mould, if I have skill.
And bring eke with you or a bowl or pan,
Quite full of water, and see then you can,
How that our business shall thrive anon.
And that you may have no suspicion,
Or wrong idea of me in your absénce,
I never will go out of your presénce,
But go with you and come with you again."
The chamber door, (here shortly to explain,)
They openéd and shut and out went they,
And forth with them they carried off the key,
And came again without the least delay.
Why should I tarry all the livelong day?
He took the chalk and shaped it in the form
Of a small mould, as I shall you inform.
I say, he took from out of his own sleeve,
Of silver, (may he ne'er success achieve,)

A thin plate, which was just an ounce in weight;
And take heed now of his accurséd sleight.
He shaped his mould in length and breadth the same
As was this plate, that doubtless was his aim,
So slily too, the priest ne'er it espied;
And in his sleeve again he did it hide.
And from the fire he took up his mattér,
And in the mould it put with merry cheer,
And in the water vessel he it cast
When he so wished, and bade the priest as fast,
"Look what there is; put in thine hand and grope;
For thou shalt find there silver, as I hope;
What else, now by mine honour, should it be?
Shavings of silver silver are, pardé!"
He put his hands in, and took up a teyne [1]
Of silver fine, and glad in every vein
Was this priest, when he saw that it was so.
"Blessings of God, and of His Mother too,
And of His saints, may you, sir Canon, have,"
He said, "and as I hope my soul to save,
If but you will vouchsafe to teach to me
This noble craft and all this subtlety,
I will be yours in all that e'er I may!"
The Canon said: "Yet will I now essay
A second time, that you may take good heed,
And be expert in this, and at your need
Another day attempt in my absénce
This cunning work and wonderful sciénce.
Let us then take another ounce of the
Quicksilver, without more ado," quoth he,

[1] A thin plate.

" And do therewith as you have done ere this
With that same other, which now silver is."
The priest him busieth in all he can,
To do as this same Canon, curséd man,
Commanded him, and fast he blew the fire,
To bring about that which he did desire.
And this false Canon ready was meanwhile,
This credulous old priest e'er to beguile,
And for pretence then in his hand bore he
A hollow stick, (take heed and warnéd be !)
In the end of which a just ounce, and no more,
Of silver filings put was, as before
Was in his coal, and stopped with wax was it,
To keep in of his filings every bit.
And while this priest was busy, in effect
This Canon with his stick him to direct
Began anon, and cast his powder in,
As he did e'er ; (the fiend out of his skin
Him turn ; I pray to God to spare him nought ;
For he was ever false in deed and thought) ;
And o'er the crucible this stick he laid,
That with the false contrivance had been made,
And stirred the coals until to melt began
The wax upon the fire, as every man,
Save he a fool be, knows without a doubt
It must, and what was in the stick ran out,
And in the crucible it quickly fell.
Now, sirs, what would you better have than well ?
When thus this priest beguiléd was again,
Supposing nought but truth, to put it plain,
He was so glad, that I cannot express
In any way his mirth and joyfulness,

And to the Canon offered he anon
Body and goods; "yea," quoth the Canon, "soon,
Though poor I be, thou shalt me skilful find;
I warn thee that there is yet more behind.
Is there of copper ought herein?" said he.
"Yea," quoth the priest, "I trow there well may be."
"Else go and buy us some, and speedily,
Now good sir, go thy way and hasten thee."
He quickly went, and with the copper came,
And this false Canon in his hands the same
Took, and of it he weighed out but an ounce.
My tongue is all too simple to pronounce,
As minister of thought, the doubleness
Of this false Canon, root of cursedness.
He friendly seemed to them who knew him nought,
But he was fiendish both in heart and thought.
It wearies me to tell of his falsenéss,
And ne'ertheless yet will I it express,
To the intent that men be warned thereby,
And for no other cause, most certainly.
He put his copper in the crucible,
And on the fire quick placed it, and as well
Cast in some powder, and the priest to blow
He made, and by his tricks right well I know,
As he did e'er, he made him work and stoop;
Just as he wished, he made the priest his dupe.
And afterwards he in the mould it cast,
And in the pan of water he at last
It placed, and in he put his own right hand.
And in his sleeve (as ye will understand
From what I said) a silver plate had he.
This cursed wretch it took out craftily,

(The priest suspecting never this false man,)
And left it at the bottom of the pan;
And in the water fumbled to and fro,
And secretly he quick took up also
The strip of copper, unknown to this priest,
And hid it, and him seizéd by the breast,
And to him spake, and thus of him made game:
"Stoop down, good sir, pardé, you are to blame,
Come help me now, as I did you ere this,
Put in your hand and see now what there is."
This priest anon took up this silver plate,
And then the Canon said: "Let us go straight
With these three plates, which we but now have wrought,
To some goldsmith, and learn if they be ought.
For, by my faith, I would not, for my hood,
Hear that they were not silver fine and good,
And thus full quickly shall it provéd be."
Unto the goldsmith went they with these three
Thin plates, and put the metal in assay,
By fire and hammer; no man could say nay,
But that they all were what they ought to be.
This foolish priest, who was more glad than he?
No bird was e'er more gladdened by the day,
Nor was there nightingale in month of May
Seen ever, that was anxious more to sing;
Nor lady merrier in her carolling;
Nor if we speak of love and womanhood,
No knight in arms a hardy deed more could
Have wished to do, to please his lady dear,
Than wished this priest of this false craft to hear.
And to the Canon thus he spake and said:
"For love of God, who to His death was led

For us, as I do here beseech of you,
What shall this same receipt cost? tell me now!"
"By'r lady," quoth this Canon, "it is dear,
I warn you well; for save I and a frère,
No man in England lives, who can it make."
"No matter," quoth he, "sir, for goodness' sake,
What shall I pay? now tell to me, I pray."
"In truth," quoth he, "it is full dear, I say;
Sir, in one word, if you it wish to have,
You shall pay forty pounds, so God me save!
But for the friendship that you showed to me
Ere this, you would have more to pay truly."
This priest the sum of forty pounds anon
Of nobles fetched, and took them everyone
Unto this Canon, for this same receipt,
Whose works were full of fraud and of deceit.
"Sir priest," he said, "O take no heed of those
Who praise my craft; I would it kept were close;
And as you love me keep it secretly;
For if men knew of all my subtlety,
Pardé, they would all have so great envý
Of me, because of my philosophy,
I should be dead, there is no other way."
The priest said: "God forbid! What do you say?
I would spend rather all I ever had,
Or e'er may have (and may I else go mad),
Than that I should you bring to such mischief."
"Of my good will, sir, you, 'tis my belief,
Have right good proof. Farewell," this Canon said.
He went his way, and ne'er the priest his head
Saw from that day; and when this priest he would
A trial make, at such times as he could,

Of this receipt, farewell! it would not be!
Lo, thus befoolèd and beguiled was he!
And thus received his introduction
To ways that bring folk to destruction.

THE MANCIPLE'S TALE.

WHEN Phœbus[1] dwelt here on this earth adown,
As ancient books have oft made mention,
He known was as the merriest batchelor
In all the world, and eke the best archer.
He slew Python[2] the serpent as he lay
Sleeping beneath the sun upon a day;
And many another noble worthy deed,
He with his bow wrought, as men well may read.
Play eke he could on every instrument,
And sing so, 'twas a melody pleasánt
To hear of his clear voice the tuneful ring.
Certés Amphion,[3] of great Thebes the king,
Who with his singing built up the city,
Could ne'er have sung one half so well as he.
Besides he was the most agreeable man,
That is or was, e'er since the world began;

---

[1] He was the son of Jupiter and Latona.

[2] Python was a serpent that Juno sent to persecute Latona, the mother of Phœbus.

[3] Amphion was the son of Jupiter and Antiope, and was supposed to be so great a musician, that by the sound of his lyre he is said to have made the stones move, and to have thus built with them the walls of Thebes.

Why should I of his looks description give?
For in this world were none so fair alive.
He was therewith filled full of gentleness,
Of honour, and of perfect worthiness.
This Phœbus, who in liberality
The flower of youth was, as in chivalry,
For sport, and as a token of the glory
'Gainst Python gained, as telleth us the story,
Was wont to bear within his hand a bow.
Now had this Phœbus in his house a crow,
Which in a cage he fostered many a day,
And it to speak taught, as men teach a jay.
White was this crow, as is a snow-white swan,
And imitate the speech of every man
It could, whenever he should tell a tale.
Besides, in all this world no nightingale
Could by a hundred thousandth part, they tell,
E'er sing so wondrous merrily and well.
Now had this Phœbus in his house a wife,
Whom he loved even better than his life,
And night and day worked he with diligence
To please her and to show her reverence;
Save only, if that I the truth must say,
Jealous he was, and would men keep away,
For he was loath that he befooled should be,
And so is every wight in some degree;
But all for nought, for it availeth nought.
A good wife, who is chaste in deed and thought,
Should not be watched in what she doth, 'tis plain;
And truly is the labour all in vain
To watch a shrew, for no gain will there be.
And this I hold to be a great folly,

Labour and time to waste in watching wives;
Thus have old writers written in their lives.
But to my purpose now return I would.
This worthy Phœbus did all that he could
To please her ever, for he had a notion,
That if he showed her alway great devotion,
No other man would chance to gain her grace;
But, God it knows, no man can e'er efface,
Or in the least constrain, that which natúre
Hath naturally set in a creatúre.
Take any bird and in a cage it put,
And do your best, while it therein is shut,
To nurse it tenderly with meat and drink,
And with such dainties, as you can bethink,
And keep it e'er so cleanly as you may;
Although the cage with gold be e'er so gay,
Yet would the bird, by twenty thousand fold,
Far rather in a forest wild and cold,
Go, and eat worms and such like wretchedness.
And never will this bird attempt the less,
To fly from out his cage whene'er he may:
His liberty the bird desireth aye.
Or take a cat, and foster her with milk
And tender flesh, and make her couch of silk,
And let her see a mouse go by the wall,
And she will leave the milk and flesh and all,
And every dainty that is in the house,
Such appetite hath she to eat the mouse.
Lo, here hath nature her dominion,
And appetite outbids discretion.

* * * *

This Phœbus, who had never thought of guile,

Deceivéd was, for all his jollity.
Unknown to him a lover low had she,
A man of little reputation,
Not to be mentioned in comparison
With Phœbus; more the harm; 'tis often so;
From which, too, cometh so much harm and woe.
It fell, when Phœbus on a journey went,
His wife in secret for her leman sent.
Her leman? certés, 'tis a knavish speech.
Forgive it me, and that I you beseech.
Wise Plato saith, as ye may all well read,
Words should be in accordance with the deed
If men would properly relate a tale,
They must be accurate in each detail.
I am a boisterous man, right thus say I,
There is not any difference truly
Betwixt a wife, who is of high degree,
(If of her virtue she dishonest be,)
And any poorer wench, other than this,
(If it so be that they both do amiss)
That, since the one is of estate above,
She shall be called his lady and his love;
And, since that other is a poor woman,
She shall be called his wench and his leman;
And God it knows full well, my own dear brother,
Men lie as low the one as lies the other.
And so 'twixt one who is a base tyránt
And any outlaw, or a thief-erránt,
The same I say, there is no difference,
(To Alexander told was this senténce)
But that the tyrant is of greater might,
And has more men, wherewith to slay downright,

And burn both house and home, to put it plain,
So therefore is he called a great captain;
The outlaw with his smaller company,
Who cannot do so great a harm as he,
Nor bring a country to so much mischief,
Men call him or an outlaw or a thief.
But since I am not up in texts right well,
I will not anything of texts you tell,
Nor to my tale will turn that I began.
When Phœbus' wife had sent for her young man,

* * * *

This milk-white crow that hung there in the cage,
Beheld them both, but never said a word.
And when again came home Phœbus the lord,
This crow he sung, cuckoo, cuckoo, cuckoo.
"What! bird?" quoth Phœbus, "what song singest thou?
Were thou not wont so merrily to sing,
That to my heart it was a pleasant thing
To hear thy voice? Alas! what song is this?"
"By God!" quoth he, "I do not sing amiss.
Phœbus," quoth he, "for all thy worthiness,
For all thy beauty and thy gentleness,
For all thy song, and all thy minstrelsy,
For all thy watching, blearéd is thine eye."

* * * *

What would you more? The crow anon with bold
Words, faithfully, all it had seen him told.

* * * *

This Phœbus thought his heart would burst in two,
An arrow chose he, as he bent his bow;
And in his anger he his wife did slay;
This is the end, there is no more to say.
He brake his instruments of minstrelsy,
Both harp, and lute, gittern and psaltery;
And eke he brake his arrows and his bow.
And after that thus spake he to the crow.
"Traitor," quoth he, "with tongue of scorpion,
Thou hast me brought to my confusion.
Alas! that I was born and cannot die!
"O dearest wife, O gem of jollity,
Who wast to me so constant and so true,
Thou liest dead with face all pale of hue,
Full guiltless, too, that dare I swear indeed.
"O reckless hand to do so foul a deed.
O troubled intellect, O recklessness,
That unadvisèd smitest the guiltless.
O distrust full of false suspicion,
Where were thy wits and thy discretion?
"O, every man beware of recklessness;
Believe in nothing without witnesses.
Smite not too soon ere that ye well know why;
And be advised well and with certainty,
Ere you do any execution
Upon your anger for suspicion.
Alas! a thousand folk, hath reckless ire
Fully undone, and laid them in the mire.
Alas! for sorrow, I myself will slay."
And to the crow he "Thou false thief," did say,
"I will requite thee soon thy treacherous tale.
Thou who didst sing like any nightingale,

Now shalt thou, wicked thief, thy song forego,
And thy white feathers every one also,
For ne'er again in thy life shalt thou speak;
Thus on a traitor should men vengeance wreak.
Thou and thine offspring ever shall be black,
And never more sweet noises shalt thou make,
But e'er shalt cry before the storm and rain,
In token that through thee my wife was slain."
And to the crow he ran, and that anon,
And pulled out his white feathers every one,
And made him black, and him bereft of song,
And eke of speech, and out of doors him flung
Unto the devil, and the fiend him take!
And for this cause are crows now alway black.
Lordlings, by this example, I you pray,
Beware, and heed take as to what ye say;
And never tell a man in all your life
How that another man hath loved his wife;
For he will hate you mortally alway.
King Solomon, as wise old writers say,
Teacheth a man to heed his tongue full well,
But as I said, my texts I know not well.
But ne'ertheless taught was I by my dame:
"My son, think of the crow e'er, in God's name;
My son, heed well thy tongue and keep thy friend,
A wicked tongue is worse than any fiend.
My son, against a fiend men may them bless.
My son, God of His endless great goodness,
Hath walled a tongue with teeth and with lips eke,
That men may well take heed of what they speak.
My son, full often, for too much of speech,
Hath many a man been slain, as writers teach.



But for a little speech advisedly
Is no man blamed, in speaking generally.
My son, thy tongue e'er shouldest thou restrain
At all times, saving when thou wouldest fain
Speak of thy God in honour or in prayer.
The chief of virtues, son, if thou wilt hear,
Is to restrain and well to heed thy tongue;
Thus do the children learn when they are young.
My son, oft from much speaking ill-advised,
Whenever speaking less would have sufficed,
Cometh much harm; thus was I told and taught;
For with much speaking sin will want for nought.
Knowest thou what a reckless tongue will do?
Right as a sword will cut and carve in two
The thickest arm, my dearest son, right so
A tongue will cut a friendship all in two.
A babbler is to God abominable.
Read Solomon so wise and honourable,
Or David in his Psalms, or Senek[1] read.
My son, speak not, but rather nod thy head;
Pretend that thou art deaf if thou shalt hear
A babbler speak of perilous mattér.
The Fleming saith, and learn as it is best,
That little talk the cause is of much rest.
My son, if thou no wicked word hast said,
Thou hast no fear that thou wilt be betrayed.
But he that hath missaid, I dare well say,
Ne'er can recall his words in any way.
That which is said, is said, and forth it go'th
Though he repent, and be he e'er so loath,

[1] Seneca.

He is the slave of him to whom was said
The tale, for which he is now ill repaid.
My son, beware, and be not author new
Of tidings, whether they be false or true.
Where'er thou goest, amongst high or low,
Heed well thy tongue and think about the crow."

THE END.

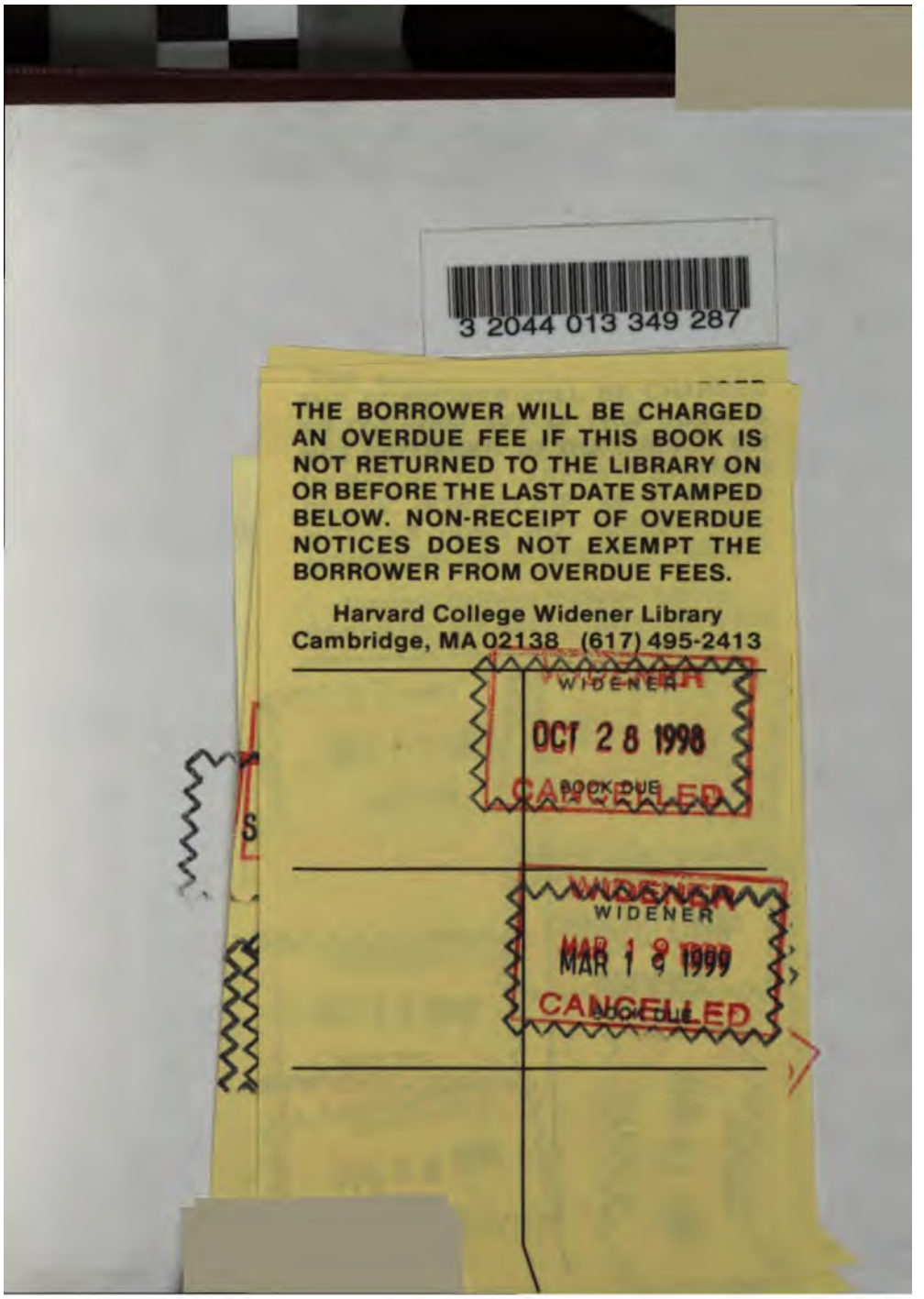
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